United Nations A/71/223

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 27 of the provisional agenda*
Advancement of women

Trafficking in women and girls

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/149, the present report compiles information on successful interventions and strategies, as well as the gaps, in addressing the gender dimensions of the problem of trafficking in persons and provides recommendations on the strengthening of human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approaches within comprehensive and balanced efforts to address trafficking in persons.

* A/71/150.

16-13025 (E) 080816

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/149, on trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly urged Governments to devise, enforce and strengthen effective measures to combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in women and girls. The Assembly called upon Governments to, inter alia, address the factors that increase the vulnerability of women and girls to being trafficked; criminalize all forms of trafficking in persons; strengthen prevention and awareness-raising action; support and protect victims of trafficking; encourage the media and business sectors to cooperate in efforts to eliminate trafficking; and enhance information-sharing and data-collection capacity.

2. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-first session a report that compiles information on interventions and strategies, as well as gaps, in addressing the gender dimensions of the problem of trafficking in persons and provides recommendations on the strengthening of human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approaches to address the issue. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request and is based on, inter alia, information received from Member States, entities of the United Nations system and other organizations. It covers the period since the issuance of the previous report (A/69/224). The report takes into account some broader considerations for addressing trafficking in women and girls, primarily their increased vulnerability in the context of migration, as well as during natural disasters and armed conflict.

II. Global and regional normative developments

3. Trafficking in human beings has been recognized by Member States not only as a human rights violation but also as a critical issue for development. The issue features strongly in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has specific targets under the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 (target 5.2), Goal 8 (target 8.7) and Goal 16 (target 16.2). The new development agenda clearly posits that all women and girls, regardless of their location, situation and circumstances or migratory status, should be entitled to a life free from violence and its consequences. Trafficking in women and girls is acknowledged as a form of violence against women and girls and the Goals explicitly commit to its elimination. The Goals also call on Member States to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned migration policies. Trafficking is antithetical to safe, orderly and regular migration. The Goals seek to address all inequalities, including those based on gender, and should therefore constitute a basis for Member States and United Nations entities to address trafficking through measures that take into account its global reach and by adopting a human rights-based approach.

4. The inclusion of trafficking within the Goals builds upon and reinforces ongoing efforts of the United Nations intergovernmental and expert bodies, which guide anti-trafficking measures through resolutions and recommendations addressing the issue. For example, at its seventieth session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons (resolution 70/179). The Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 2015/23). In the agreed conclusions adopted at its

the sixtieth session, the Commission on the Status of Women acknowledged the positive contribution of migrant women workers to inclusive growth and sustainable development and recognized that trafficking in persons disproportionately affects women and girls. General Recommendation No. 32 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women (CEDAW/C/GC/32) made reference to the persistence of other forms of exploitation associated with displacement, such as trafficking. Furthermore, links between trafficking and migration, and specific risks for women and girls, were highlighted in the report on violence against women migrant workers (A/70/205). Those links were also acknowledged by the General Assembly in its resolution on violence against women migrant workers (resolution 70/130).

5. The Human Rights Council has also identified links between migration and trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Apart from the resolution on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (resolution 26/8), the Council has adopted several resolutions that are relevant to the issue of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, and its links with migration. Those include resolutions on human rights and arbitrary deprivation of nationality (26/14), in which it is stressed that women and girls deprived of nationality as well as stateless children are at greater risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation; on the protection of the human rights of migrants, including migrants in transit (29/2), which recognizes the need to address the special situation and vulnerability of migrant women and girls; and on unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights (29/12), which highlights the exposure of those children and adolescents to abuses such as trafficking, including for forced labour, sexual abuse and exploitation.

6. At its nineteenth to twenty-fifth sessions, the Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review made 659 recommendations relating to trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Those recommendations were addressed to 94 of the 98 Member States under review, and stressed the need to identify, protect and support victims of trafficking, including those exposed to trafficking through migration processes. The findings demonstrate that trafficking in persons remains a significant and serious global issue and that further efforts are required by the majority of States.

7. The human rights treaty bodies,[1] established under the core human rights treaties, continued to address the issue of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in their concluding observations on the reports submitted by States parties. They specifically highlighted efforts to combat trafficking in migrant workers.

8. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, continued to examine the impact of anti-trafficking measures on the human rights of victims. In her annual report to the General Assembly in 2014, a 10-year assessment of the mandate, the Special Rapporteur drew the attention of the General Assembly to the importance of safe migration processes, based on a human rights

[1] The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

framework, as a means of preventing trafficking (A/69/269). In her report to the General Assembly at its seventieth session, in 2015, the Special Rapporteur stated that meaningful and substantive due diligence, based on a human rights-based approach, provided the necessary framework to ensure policy coherence between anti-trafficking policy and other related policy areas, such as immigration and labour-market policies (A/70/260). In her 2016 thematic report to the Human Rights Council, she focused on the issue of trafficking in persons in conflict and post-conflict situations, noting the particular vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking in such situations (A/HRC/32/41).

III. Current context

A. Trafficking in women and girls as a human rights challenge

9. Trafficking remains a serious human rights violation of which the majority of detected victims are women and girls. Almost every country is affected as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. The most recent *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*,[2] produced by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2014, provides an overview of the levels, patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels, and it is based on trafficking cases detected mainly between 2010 and 2012. According to the report, women and girls accounted for 70 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally. Moreover, the trafficking of children appears to be increasing, as 33 per cent of all victims are children, two out of three victims being girls. Approximately half of all detected victims of trafficking are adult women.

10. Women and girls are trafficked particularly for certain forms of exploitation, such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and, more recently, forced marriage. According to the report, 53 per cent of all detected victims of trafficking in 2011 were subjected to sexual exploitation. The vast majority of them were women and girls, representing 97 per cent of the victims of trafficking for that purpose.

11. Efforts continue, including by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to rescue and assist trafficked women and girls. In 2014, approximately half of all victims assisted by IOM (49 per cent) were female, 17 per cent of them girls. The majority of women and girls assisted by IOM had been trafficked for the purpose of forced labour, which includes domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Data provided by IOM for 2015 show similar patterns. Those figures show a slight decrease in the number of women and girls assisted since the previous report of the Secretary-General on the issue (A/69/224). IOM acknowledges that those data are not necessarily representative of trends in the prevalence of global human trafficking, but instead reflect areas where IOM has the most extensive programming.

12. Persistent gender inequality is a root cause of this human rights violation alongside a persistent demand for trafficked women and girls. The harms of trafficking are known to be more severe for women and girls than for men and boys given the exposure of the former to specific forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation and violence, domestic servitude and forced marriage. In addition, the

[2] *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2014* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.V.10).

ability of women to access support and other services is limited. Together, these factors make the impacts long lasting and recovery particularly difficult. It is therefore important that countries apply a gendered approach to trafficking, with respect to both prevention and response, to ensure that the needs of women and girls are met.

13. Ironically, although they are among its primary victims, women feature prominently among those convicted of the crime. While traffickers tend to be adult males, more women are convicted for trafficking offences than for most other crimes (10 to 15 per cent for crimes in general versus 38 per cent for trafficking crimes). That is a significant anomaly in crime trends, which has not been adequately explored or addressed. According to UNODC, a possible explanation for the situation is that women are more often used in "low-ranking" activities in the trafficking process, and they are more likely to interact with victims, including through the recruitment process, which exposes them to easier detection and exposure during victim testimonies. While that may explain, in part, why so many women are convicted, further research and analysis is required given the significant variation in the data concerning women convicted of crimes generally versus their convictions for trafficking. Questions remain as to the possibility that many women convicted of trafficking have themselves been victims of such crimes and are coerced into participating in the recruitment of new victims.

B. Special vulnerabilities in the context of conflict, humanitarian emergencies and migration

14. To date, the issue of trafficking in persons and the mechanisms to respond have been addressed mainly as a development issue. Since the previous report, however, more attention has been paid to trafficking in persons during conflicts and disasters and the potential vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking during migration processes.[3] The intensification of migration flows over the past few years, both through regular and irregular means, has increased migrants' exposure and risk of falling prey to traffickers. The situation becomes clearer in the context of recent data that indicate that almost 60 million people had been forcibly displaced by the end of 2014, including refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. Women and men accounted for almost half (49 per cent) of the total number of refugees, women and men being equal in number. Children constituted 51 per cent of all refugees. Those figures demonstrate the large numbers of people who are potentially vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, in particular the forms of exploitation that most affect women and girls, such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and child, early and forced marriage.

15. Reports have highlighted the targeting of women and girls during conflicts for sexual exploitation and slavery,[4] and non-State armed groups have reportedly abducted women and girls for the purpose of trafficking for sexual exploitation,

[3] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "World at war: global trends: forced displacement in 2014". Available from www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/country/556725e69/unhcr-global-trends-2014.html.

[4] International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Addressing human trafficking and exploitation in times of crisis, July 2015". Available from .https://publications.iom.int/system/files/addressing_human_trafficking.pdf.

domestic servitude and child, early and forced marriage.[5] During conflict and disaster, criminal activities, including organized crime, can increase owing to the weakening or absence of the rule of law and the lack of capacity to respond to such crimes.[6] That creates an environment which can foster increased trafficking. Furthermore, in such situations, the national institutions and structures, as well as the community and family support networks, which usually help to protect people from such exploitation, often are no longer in place.

16. The risk of trafficking in such circumstances can also result in other forms of exploitation. For example, in situations where parents fear that their children, especially girls, may be trafficked, they may instead turn to what they see as preventative measures, such as child, early and forced marriage. Humanitarian crisis and post-crisis responses must actively address the need to protect and prevent trafficking in persons and ensure that those measures are gender sensitive and responsive to the specific needs of women and girls. The problem of trafficking in various contexts needs to be viewed along a conflict and crisis-peace-development continuum.

17. There is a strong connection between trafficking in persons and migration. Many people migrate driven by the hope for a better future. Such migration is often the result of persistent inequality and discrimination, lack of access to educational and economic opportunities, the challenges of being trapped in the informal economy, including in unpaid family work, and limited access to opportunities or to participation in the benefits of the economy and the broader society. Whether they go through regular or irregular migration processes, those migrants, especially women and girls, may be more vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation as well as other forms of exploitation (see A/HRC/32/41). Such situations lead many women to take risks associated with irregular migration.

18. Even documented migrants, such as women migrant workers, are at risk of being trafficked and/or exploited in their new workplace, given that they have minimum leverage to negotiate the conditions of their work and may have limited knowledge of their rights. Discriminatory migration laws and policies, which restrict the ability of women, or particular groups of women, to freely leave or enter a country or district or to freely seek or change their employment, can increase women's vulnerability to trafficking and labour exploitation.[7]

19. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants has stated that the systemic abuse of migrants continues despite the emergence of bilateral labour mobility agreements intended to improve social protections and curb illicit activity (see A/HRC/32/40). This includes violations of their rights that increase their risk of exposure to human trafficking. In this context, the Special Rapporteur stressed that, while States retain the sovereign authority to regulate immigration, even when

[5] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July-10 September 2014". Available from www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/MENARegion/Pages/UNAMIHRReports.aspx.

[6] Sara Craggs and others, "Responding to human trafficking and exploitation in times of crisis", Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative, issue brief (IOM, 2016). Available from https://micicinitiative.iom.int/issue-briefs.

[7] OHCHR, "Recommended principles and guidelines on human rights at international borders", 2014. Available from http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/OHCHR_Recommended_Principles_Guidelines.pdf.

making immigration decisions, under international law States are still required to respect, promote and fulfil their human rights obligations to all, regardless of their status (ibid., para. 24). This includes ensuring that migration and labour laws and policies are in line with human rights standards and that gender inequality and discrimination are explicitly considered in such laws and policies.

C. Global and national responses to trafficking

20. Although responses to trafficking have relied strongly on the criminal justice system, particularly after the crime has occurred, prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators remain limited. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, entered into force in December 2003 and guides the development of responses. As at August 2014, of the 173 countries considered for the *Global Report* analysis, 146 (85 per cent) criminalize all aspects of trafficking in persons explicitly listed in the Palermo Protocol.[2] According to the *Global Report*, however, large and highly populated countries in Asia and South America still have only partial or no legislation. Considering the population sizes of those countries and their partial or complete absence of relevant legislation, this means that almost 2 billion people still live in a situation where trafficking has not been criminalized as required by the Palermo Protocol. This leads the authors of the *Global Report* to conclude that "this situation combined with a very low number of convictions makes trafficking in persons a crime of vast impunity".[2]

21. The data on investigations, prosecutions and convictions collected during the 2010-2012 period and used in preparing the *Global Report* also confirm the extensive impunity for the crime of trafficking. They show that the number of convictions for trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, remains very low. According to the report, about 15 per cent of the countries analysed had not recorded a single conviction during the reporting period, and one fourth of the countries had recorded fewer than 10 convictions. About one third of the countries with few or no recorded convictions, however, detected a significant number of victims. A large number of submissions by Member States highlight the challenges to such prosecutions. While this demonstrates the efforts of local institutions to identify and possibly assist victims, it also shows that traffickers continue to act, for the most part, with impunity.

22. Although trafficking, especially in women and children, is a significant concern on the agenda of Governments and non-governmental actors globally, anti-trafficking interventions frequently do not sufficiently respond to the specific needs of women and girls. Responses to trafficking continue to place a greater focus on the prosecution and conviction of traffickers rather than on support for victims. As a result, many interventions to address trafficking may not be effective or empowering for victims.

23. Significant change in this area is unlikely without the provision of adequate support through specialized and comprehensive services. International organizations and human rights bodies[8] have called upon Member States to ensure, at a minimum,

[8] See the report of the Human Rights Council Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice (A/HRC/32/44).

that women and girls who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes have the right to access sexual and reproductive health services, are not subject to violence or discrimination by State agents or private persons and have access to equal protection under the law.

24. In addition to improving efforts by the criminal justice system, the prevention of trafficking requires much more attention than it has received to date. The root causes of and risk factors for the trafficking of women and girls include gendered poverty, lack of viable employment opportunities and limited access to education. These factors may result in desperate attempts to seek other viable economic opportunities. Efforts to flee histories of abuse also prompt women and girls to take risks that may lead to them being trafficked. In addition, the lack of a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach in labour laws and regulations, and gender-blind migration laws and policies, as well as persistent and pervasive gender inequality and discrimination, continue to fuel the trafficking in women and girls.

25. Prevention efforts are still very much limited to education and awareness-raising campaigns and, more recently, to interventions that address the demand for trafficking. While important, those initiatives are not enough to adequately respond to the complex causes of trafficking, especially those related to the exploitation of women and girls. It is therefore imperative that, in addition to the measures taken to hold criminals accountable and the services provided to ensure that victims are treated with dignity and respect, more action be taken to address the root causes of and factors that contribute to trafficking.

IV. Actions taken by Member States and the United Nations system to address the issue of trafficking in women and girls

26. The following section outlines the measures taken by Member States[9] and United Nations entities[10] to address trafficking in women and girls. To the extent reported, the measures that address the links between trafficking and migration are highlighted, as are the measures to protect from trafficking refugees and persons internally displaced as a result of conflict and disaster.

A. Laws, policies and accountability for trafficking

27. International law obligates and guides States with respect to the adoption of anti-trafficking laws and policies, and the adherence of States to relevant treaties is indicative of their commitment to action. Many of the reporting Member States are

[9] Thirty-nine Member States made submissions to this report, including Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Malawi, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Serbia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Turkey and Uganda.

[10] Inputs were received from six United Nations entities: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Children's Fund; International Organization for Migration.

parties to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as being parties to various regional, multilateral and bilateral agreements and arrangements. Many of those arrangements, however, continue to focus on efforts to apprehend and prosecute traffickers rather than on cooperation to prevent trafficking or to provide victim support and assistance.

28. In addition to criminalizing trafficking within the framework of criminal or penal law, an increasing number of Member States have established legal provisions with respect to victim protection and support, including legal assistance, temporary and/or permanent residency permits and reflection periods, as well as protection for witnesses during criminal proceedings (Argentina, Australia, Djibouti, France, Serbia and Turkey). Such interventions have contributed to the enhancement of survivors' access to justice by obtaining more convictions. Some States also highlighted the availability of civil and criminal remedies, victim compensation and/or reparation orders for victims of human trafficking (Argentina, Armenia, Australia and France). Recognizing that it is often difficult for victims of trafficking to seek justice, because of the challenges of engaging with various branches of the judicial system or different legal systems, some countries endeavoured to simplify access (Switzerland) or to facilitate access through the provision of legal counselling (Argentina).

29. As many migrants become vulnerable to trafficking during various stages of the migration process, Member States are increasingly taking into consideration the specific vulnerabilities of migrants to trafficking, particularly women and girls, in new legislation (Greece, Italy and Sweden) and policies (Czech Republic, Greece, Morocco and Sri Lanka). Several Member States have revised their existing immigration law to prevent the repatriation of selected undocumented foreigners and stateless persons in order to protect them from trafficking and violence (Azerbaijan, Belgium, Greece and Italy). Others have taken measures to protect and assist migrant women through national action plans and strategies on domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking (Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Japan and Lebanon). Italy highlighted its allocation of financial resources to implement migration and trafficking policies that are gender sensitive and respectful of migrants' human rights, while the Bureau of Foreign Employment in Sri Lanka is addressing the links between trafficking and labour migration.

30. The United Nations system has supported the work of Member States in developing laws and improving law enforcement and criminal justice responses. They have also helped to address issues relating to migration policies and programmes to reduce the vulnerability of migrants to trafficking. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNODC have contributed to the development of legislation to address trafficking. UNODC and UN-Women have developed specific tools for law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges. United Nations entities have supported the efforts of Member States to better reflect a human rights-based approach in migration policies and to ensure that measures to control undocumented migration take into consideration the risks of trafficking and exploitation (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNODC, UN-Women and IOM).

31. The United Nations system, encouraged by the work of the Security Council, has also stepped up its efforts to address trafficking in the context of conflicts and disasters. At a recent open debate concerning sexual violence in conflict, held in the Security Council on 2 June 2016, many Member States referred to the increased vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking in times of conflict and called for gender-sensitive and responsive approaches to the issue (see S/PV.7704).

B. Prevention of trafficking

32. The majority of Member States focused their contributions to the present report on their efforts to criminalize trafficking and their approaches to providing victims, particularly women and girls, with protection and support services following their victimization. Prevention strategies, however, are also critical to tackling this challenge. Education, training and awareness-raising programmes to improve knowledge and awareness of human trafficking and its risks remain the most common measures being implemented by the majority of reporting Member States. Increased attention is also being given to reducing the demand for forced labour through initiatives aimed at sensitizing and involving private sector partners.

33. Other activities undertaken by States include communication through electronic and print media and discussions on the prevention of human trafficking as part of school and university curricula. Many of the activities are being carried out in multiple languages and in cooperation with partners, including non-governmental organizations, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions and members of the media and the business sector. Member States also provided various types of information in multiple languages to women migrant workers in countries of origin and destination (Burkina Faso, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Singapore). Information campaigns have also been developed to target specific groups, such as children and young people (Hungary, Peru and Serbia); women who may be vulnerable to trafficking under the guise of marriage (Armenia and Ukraine); indigenous and aboriginal communities (Peru); domestic workers (Switzerland); rural populations (Georgia); and the tourism sector (Dominican Republic, Mexico and Philippines). Georgia undertook a campaign targeting women and girls who may be trafficked for the purposes of surrogacy. Paraguay worked, through its Ministry of Labour and Social Security, to increase the knowledge of target populations about immigration rights and risks.

34. Awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns targeting the private sector have also been launched (Georgia, Peru, Singapore and Sweden), some of them aimed at the tourism sector (Morocco), the tobacco industry (Malawi) or the entertainment and restaurant sectors (Republic of Korea). In Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, IOM is working with the Governments, as well as workers' unions and employers' associations, to address the exploitative recruitment of migrants, especially women, into labour supply chains. As female migrant workers are highly vulnerable to discrimination, poor working conditions, abuse, exploitation and, at times, human trafficking, IOM seeks to empower businesses to better understand and respond to the complex human and labour rights challenges that are posed by unethical recruitment practices within their supply chains.

35. There has been an increase in the identification and addressing of factors that fuel the demand for trafficking in human beings, with a specific focus on private sector actors and consumers. Measures have focused on raising the costs of using such labour (Greece, Italy and Japan) and improving labour conditions in sectors likely to use victims trafficked for labour exploitation by strengthening and enforcing labour standards and regulations (Czech Republic, Mexico and Qatar). The private sector, in collaboration with labour unions, has addressed exploitative labour practices within supply chains (Austria), as well as formulated consumer-based initiatives against products made with the use of trafficked labour (Finland and New Zealand).

36. Very few Member States reported efforts to address root causes of human trafficking such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality and economic inequality. Greece and Peru are integrating prevention measures that address economic vulnerability into national policies, with specific focus on female migrants and refugees. Other Member States reported the provision of skills training to migrants to protect them from becoming vulnerable to traffickers (Albania, Colombia, Morocco and Republic of Korea). IOM prevention activities seek to enhance economic and livelihood opportunities and access to social services, as well as community infrastructure in at-risk areas, such as refugee camps and transition zones.

37. United Nations entities are addressing prevention and awareness-raising initiatives through support to high-level dialogues, international conferences and national campaigns on trafficking (Department of Economic and Social Affairs; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Women, UNODC and IOM). It is also important to mention the United Nations Global Compact, which aims to engage the private sector in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the target on trafficking; a specific example of such engagement is the Business Action Pledge in Response to the Refugee Crisis.[11] United Nations entities, including IOM, OHCHR, UNESCO, UNODC and UN-Women, prominently marked the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, on 30 July. Such initiatives, high-level dialogues, international conferences and international days provide excellent opportunities for consistently and systematically considering the specific needs of women and girls. However, few of the efforts reported dealt with the root causes or risk factors for trafficking. This is a significant gap and challenge in the overall response to trafficking in women and girls.

38. With respect to the increased risk of trafficking in women and girls in humanitarian crisis situations, only a few Member States (Colombia and Nepal) made reference to specific vulnerabilities resulting from conflicts and disasters. The United Nations system is working in partnership with countries at the national and regional levels to enhance the protection of refugee and displaced women and girls (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and UN-Women). Given the devastating consequences and increased risk of women and girls being trafficked in situations of conflict and natural disaster, the apparent dearth of experience and information on approaches is a critical gap for policymakers.

[11] United Nations Global Compact and UNHCR, "Business action pledge in response to the refugee crisis", 2016. Available from www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/refugee-crisis.

C. Multisectoral services and programmes for trafficking victims

39. In an increasing number of Member States, protection and support services are available to women and children who are victims of trafficking. Such services include medical, psychological, legal, social and financial assistance, as well as witness protection and shelters, which are often run in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and with the financial support of Governments (Argentina, Greece, Monaco and Turkey). In order to facilitate access to services, Member States have put in place national referral mechanisms and/or hotlines for victims and their families (Argentina, Australia, Burkina Faso, China, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan and Sri Lanka). Tunisia recently developed an information guide on the services available to victims of trafficking. In Italy, victims of trafficking play the role of "cultural mediators" in delivering services and providing information to victims. While the majority of Member States reported that services were available to victims, only some of them (Australia, China, Japan and Peru) provided information on either the number of victims accessing such services or the funding allocated for the provision of such services.

40. Women and girls who are victims of trafficking need various services to help them to recover from their abusive experience and to ensure that they are not again exposed to violence. To achieve this, several Member States have put in place services and mechanisms to protect identified trafficked women and girls, including through the provision of information on services available to survivors of violence (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines and Singapore). Such services took the form of multilingual telephone hotlines, e-mail addresses and the provision of information on shelters, legal aid, health services, compensation and redress. Certain Member States highlighted the importance of establishing partnerships with non-State actors in the provision of those services (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Philippines and Singapore). With support from UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM a number of countries have set up a dedicated initiative to protect the rights of migrant women and children, with a particular focus on the protection and delivery of services to vulnerable unaccompanied, trafficked and separated children (Croatia, Greece, Serbia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey).

41. The correct identification of victims is essential to the delivery of services. Victims of trafficking must also be properly identified so that they are not charged and prosecuted for crimes arising from being trafficked. For example, in some cases, women and girls are not identified as victims of trafficking, but instead are detained and deported as illegal migrants, particularly as immigration laws and policies are becoming stricter. While the identification of victims remains challenging for Member States, various countries have increased their efforts in this area. Australia, Croatia, Italy, Serbia, Singapore, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste and Uganda have conducted training of immigration and law enforcement officers to improve screening tools to identify trafficked persons. Some of the training specifically focused on children and unaccompanied minors, with support from UNICEF. Some Member States reported on programmes for the rehabilitation, reintegration and return of victims, in cooperation with IOM and/or non-governmental organizations, in order to ensure sensitive and victim-centred responses, including assistance in the identification of victims (Cambodia, Malta, Peru and Switzerland).

42. A majority of reporting Member States referred to the provision of temporary and/or permanent residency permits. With some exceptions (Australia, Colombia and Finland), the provision of temporary or extended stays was contingent on the cooperation of victims with law enforcement and their participation in prosecutions. Despite such contingencies, immediate protection support and assistance were available. Tying the granting of temporary or permanent residence to the participation of victims in the criminal justice system remains a challenge to the development of a victim-centred and rights-based response to trafficking in human beings.

43. When dealing with the trafficking of women and girls, professionals from various sectors that respond to trafficking in general require training to deal with trafficking in a gender-sensitive and effective manner. Nearly all Member States reported that they had provided training and produced guidelines/manuals on trafficking in women and girls and, in some cases, on the human rights of women and children. Such training was directed at a broad range of beneficiaries, including government officials, in particular immigration personnel, police officers, prosecutors, judicial personnel, border officials, social and health workers, teachers, workplace/labour inspectors, staff in detention facilities, military and peacekeeping personnel, transport personnel and others who might come into contact with women and girls who have been victims of trafficking. The scope of training included the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators and the identification, protection of and support to victims. Armenia added training in regional administration centres and for mayors of villages with high rates of seasonal migration to improve the response at the lowest decentralized level.

44. United Nations entities (UNICEF, UNODC and UN-Women) also organized training and capacity-building events on trafficking, in cooperation with other organizations, institutions and Member States. UNICEF, for example, engaged in capacity-building with police, prosecutors and judges in more than 80 countries, with specific focus on the most affected countries in the Middle East and the Balkans. UN-Women helped to increase the capacity of Governments and civil society to develop strategies for preventing trafficking in women and girls in Afghanistan, India and Jordan. In Sri Lanka, training by IOM of the police included a module on referrals and on how to provide a gender-sensitive response to trafficking. UNICEF and UNFPA launched and disseminated the revised guidelines for integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action,[12] which include guidance relating to trafficking and the protection of women and girls from violence in such contexts.

45. The United Nations system also contributes to the protection of and support for victims of trafficking through the provision of funds to non-governmental organizations to enhance the services they provide. UNODC continued to manage the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, established under the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Two global calls for proposals were issued in 2011 and 2014 to identify projects to provide assistance to victims. As at May 2016, the Trust Fund had supported the projects of 30 non-governmental organizations in 26 countries around the world with paid and committed grants

[12] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action, 2015". Available from http://gbvguidelines.org/.

worth $1.75 million. Projects are directly assisting around 3,500 trafficked persons per year with services such as the provision of basic shelter, psychosocial support, legal counselling and representation in court, education and vocational training, primary health care and small stipends.

D. Data and research

46. Data are crucial for designing and implementing effective policies and programmes that tackle violence and discrimination against women and girls in general and trafficking in particular. Research is also essential to the development and implementation of better legislation and policies as well as other targeted measures, including services for victims. Just as the number of cases that come to the attention of the police, courts or service providers is small, methodologies for the collection of data differ and estimates of the number of victims vary, making it difficult to compare experiences and insights, draw conclusions and approach the problem in a more systematic and effective way.

47. The scant information on the scope of trafficking of women and girls at the country level continues to be a concern worldwide. Member States drew attention to their efforts to collect sex-disaggregated data on migrants and refugees in general (Argentina, Armenia, Poland, Sri Lanka and Ukraine); violence against women and girls in general, including trafficking (Brazil, Ireland, Italy, Namibia and Poland); and migrant women, including trafficked women and survivors of violence, to improve their access to justice (Brazil). Some Member States reported activities aimed at strengthening institutional mechanisms at the national or local level that are responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data on gender equality issues in general (Colombia, Georgia, Mexico, Singapore, Sweden, Timor-Leste and Uganda).

48. Some Member States reported efforts to initiate, enhance or diversify the collection and analysis of data on trafficking in persons in order to gain a better understanding of the prevalence of trafficking as well as the extent of the gaps in knowledge and understanding of the issue. Those efforts included research programmes, studies or training, sometimes in cooperation with research institutes (Argentina, Armenia, Mexico and Switzerland). Many Member States collected some forms of administrative data from various services, some of which were disaggregated by sex and/or age (Argentina, Armenia, Italy and Monaco). While those are primarily administrative data from the criminal justice system, some Member States also have data from victim services (Australia and Switzerland) or from government departments, such as those responsible for social services (Argentina). A small number of Member States collected a broader range of data, including on the identified causes of trafficking in women and children, the nationalities of victims and the identified forms of exploitation. Romania continues to produce an annual report on the situation of trafficking in that country, based on data collected on identified victims, and Denmark has developed a set of indicators against which to collect data.

49. United Nations entities contributed to the overall bank of knowledge on trafficking through the collection of data and research undertaken to better understand and improve responses to trafficking. They did so in a number of ways, including by supporting studies and research, compiling and maintaining or coordinating global

trafficking statistics and databases (UNICEF, UNODC, International Labour Organization (ILO) and IOM) and developing databases on the jurisprudence of human rights mechanisms (OHCHR) or judicial outcomes of human trafficking (UNODC). IOM has the largest database on victims of human trafficking in the world and has teamed up with other leaders in this field to develop and host the largest open access, multi-stakeholder repository of data on human trafficking. Through the development of its human trafficking data portal, IOM will rapidly enhance the evidence base for the development and evaluation of anti-trafficking responses.

50. IOM also conducted quantitative and qualitative research on irregular migration routes and trends, mixed migration flows, the causes and consequences of human trafficking and migrant exploitation as well as on protection responses, and the structures, motivations and modus operandi of organized criminal groups. ILO has helped to develop an international labour migration statistics database for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The data collected will be sex-disaggregated to enable a more detailed understanding of gender differences in migration decisions and outcomes. UNODC continues to prepare the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, to manage the human trafficking case law database and to develop methodologies to measure the hidden numbers of trafficking victims worldwide, particularly in the light of the need for Member States to monitor progress on several Sustainable Development Goals that explicitly refer to trafficking in persons.

E. United Nations coordination on trafficking

51. The United Nations system continues to coordinate interventions to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and to protect and support victims of trafficking, in particular through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. In October 2014, the Group published its second policy paper, which provides guidance to organizations and practitioners by mapping the dimensions of the demand for labour that is likely to be met through trafficking and by highlighting strategies that can be used to address it.[13]

52. In 2015, ILO launched Alliance 8.7 to coordinate interventions relating to target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. Alliance 8.7 will play a crucial role in coordinating with Governments and the private sector. The engagement of the private sector in advancing sustainable development to prevent global instability is also one of the targets of the forthcoming United Nations Private Sector Forum 2016, which is being organized by the United Nations Global Compact. Discussions will cover the prevention of and response to trafficking, with a focus on the demand side.

[13] Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, "Preventing trafficking in persons by addressing demand". Available from http://icat.network/sites/default/files/publications/documents/ICAT_Demand_paper_-_FINAL_0.pdf.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

53. **States have demonstrated their commitment to achieving gender equality and ending all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking, through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international agreements.**

54. **States have made some strides towards ensuring that laws, policies and programmes to prevent and respond to trafficking in women and girls are gender sensitive and responsive, but further efforts are still required. States do not sufficiently differentiate between and respond to the risks faced by women and girls, who are more vulnerable to trafficking, in particular for specific forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced marriage.**

55. **Adherence to relevant international instruments and their implementation continue to increase. While States are taking action aimed at ensuring that both existing and new laws are enforced consistently and effectively and that law enforcement officers are adequately trained, prosecution rates continue to be low.**

56. **The evidence on the links between trafficking and migration continues to grow, but further work is required both to better understand the linkages and to develop more effective responses to eliminate the risk of trafficking in the migration process. Although a greater number of Member States are responding to the connections between trafficking, migration and the demand for labour, the laws governing each of these areas have not been harmonized in line with human rights principles. The majority of laws also remain blind to the specific issues and risks women and girls face.**

57. **Identifying the victims of trafficking remains challenging, although there is a greater focus on building the capacity of officials to do so. While many countries have established or enhanced support services for trafficked persons, especially women and children, temporary and/or permanent residence is not available to all victims, irrespective of their ability or willingness to participate in criminal proceedings. A human rights-based approach to trafficking requires that full support and assistance be provided to all victims of trafficking, irrespective of their willingness to engage in criminal proceedings.**

58. **Recent global data have demonstrated that women feature prominently in the number of those convicted for trafficking crimes, in contrast to women's involvement in all other crimes. The explanations for this disparity remain largely speculative and it therefore requires research and analysis.**

59. **Despite increased efforts to improve evidence and knowledge on the scope and nature of trafficking in women and girls, data continue to be unreliable and deficient or focused primarily on outcomes in the criminal justice system. More comprehensive data, collected and analysed in a globally consistent and comparable manner, allow for the development of improved and more targeted solutions and better sharing of experiences, and are required to measure progress in reaching the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to trafficking.**

60. Responses to trafficking need to be considered along a conflict and crisis-peace-development continuum. There is little information on how Member States are addressing the increased vulnerability of women and children to exploitation and trafficking among refugees, those seeking asylum and persons internally displaced as a result of conflict and disaster.

B. Recommendations

61. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the realization of their human rights must be at the core of all international policy commitments, including the forthcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, and all policies and actions to address such movements.

62. States should ensure that the prevention of and responses to trafficking fully take into account the gender- and age-specific aspects of this violation of human rights. They should, in particular, address the specific needs of women and girls, who are the primary victims of sexual exploitation, forced marriage and domestic servitude. The responses should also address gender-based discrimination and gender inequality as root causes as well as the risk factors that increase the vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking.

63. States should ensure that specific laws that criminalize all forms of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, are in place in accordance with the standards set by the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its associated Protocols. Those laws should also be enforced to ensure that all perpetrators, especially those at the helm of trafficking operations, are held accountable for all their crimes.

64. States should expand prevention measures and address the factors that make people, especially women and girls, vulnerable to trafficking. Those efforts must aim to address, inter alia, poverty and unemployment, access to education, the risks posed by unsafe migration processes and gender-based discrimination. Groups that are at increased risk of becoming victims of trafficking, such as women migrant workers, should be specifically targeted.

65. States should ensure coherence between the laws on and measures responding to migration, labour and trafficking. Such laws and measures should be based on human rights principles and must be gender sensitive to ensure that the human rights of migrant women and girls, including migrant women workers, are protected throughout the migration and employment process and provide effective protection against trafficking. States should also ensure that measures aimed at addressing irregular migration and combating transnational organized crime do not adversely affect the enjoyment of their human rights and dignity by trafficked women and girls and those vulnerable to trafficking in the migration cycle, including before departure, during transit, at borders, in destination countries and upon safe return.

66. States, together with relevant United Nations entities, should undertake further research into the links between migration and trafficking to guide the development of age- and gender-sensitive interventions that address the vulnerability of women and girl migrants.

67. Given the increased vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking during conflicts and disasters, as well as the devastating consequences for women and girls in such circumstances, gender-sensitive responses by States to trafficking in those contexts is required. States should also include the prevention of trafficking in women and girls in all national, regional and international initiatives taken in response to conflicts and disasters. States and relevant stakeholders should also include anti-trafficking and protection measures in disaster risk management plans as well as in recovery/post-conflict strategies.

68. The United Nations system and other concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should cooperate with Governments with a view to improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex- and age-disaggregated data to help to elucidate the gender dimensions of trafficking in human beings, especially in the contexts of migration, armed conflict, disasters and humanitarian emergencies, which expose women and girls to further human rights violations.

69. The United Nations system, together with relevant research bodies, should further investigate the significant disparity in conviction rates for women in relation to trafficking compared with crime in general.

70. The United Nations system should also continue to support national efforts to address trafficking in women and girls in a coordinated way to ensure effective implementation and evaluation in a manner that provides positive outcomes for women and girls.

United Nations A/71/224

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 58 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Question of Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/98 of 9 December 2015, summarizes the most recent report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2016/355) and covers the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016.

* A/71/150.

16-13067 (E) 110816

Please recycle

1. On 9 December 2015, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 70/98 on the question of Western Sahara. The present report, covering the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, is submitted in accordance with paragraph 7 of the aforementioned resolution.

2. The Security Council addresses Western Sahara as a matter of peace and security, calling in successive resolutions for a "mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara". The Fourth Committee of the General Assembly (the Special Political and Decolonization Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples address it as a Non-Self-Governing Territory and an issue of decolonization.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2218 (2015), I submitted a report to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2016/355). In that report, I informed the Council of the situation on the ground, the status and the progress of the political negotiations on Western Sahara, my activities and those of my Chef de Cabinet and my Personal Envoy and the existing challenges to the operations of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), as well as steps taken to address them, in keeping with the request of the Security Council in its resolution 2218 (2015).

4. West of the berm, public life proceeded peacefully during the reporting period. On 4 September, municipal elections and, for the first time, regional elections were held in Morocco and Western Sahara west of the berm. Insofar as MINURSO could attest, the elections took place without incident west of the berm despite the contested status of the entire territory. King Mohammed VI visited Laayoune in November 2015 and Dakhla in February 2016. On 6 November, he delivered his annual speech on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the "Green March" from Laayoune. He stated that the autonomy initiative "is the most Morocco can offer" and that "[i]ts implementation hinges on achieving a final political settlement within the framework of the United Nations". He added that the integration of the territory into unified Morocco would be conducted principally through the "development model for the southern provinces". On 12 November and 15 February, the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, Omar Hilale, wrote to me indicating that the initiative would consist of projects in the phosphate, agricultural, fisheries and tourism sectors and that its global budget would be $7.7 billion.

5. In a statement on 4 November, I recalled that the definitive status of Western Sahara is the object of the negotiating process under my purview foreseen in successive relevant Security Council resolutions. I expressed regret at the absence of genuine negotiations "without preconditions and in good faith to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara". On 5 November, Mr. Hilale called on me to express Morocco's dismay at the content and the timing of the statement. He stressed that the use of the term "definitive status" was new and in contradiction of Security Council resolutions, which called simply for "a mutually acceptable political solution". On 17 November, the Secretary-General of Frente Polisario, Mohamed Abdelaziz, wrote to me welcoming my call for true negotiations,

affirming Polisario support and warning that the "conflict cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely".

6. In the refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria, public life and social activities were conducted peacefully and in a relatively calm atmosphere. As agreed with Algeria and Frente Polisario, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) carried out a technical visit to the refugee camps near Tindouf from 29 July to 4 August 2015. The visit enabled OHCHR to gather first-hand information and gain a greater understanding of the human rights situation and challenges in the refugee camps. The visit also enabled OHCHR to explore future forms of cooperation to ensure effective human rights protection for all. A similar visit was carried out, as jointly agreed with Morocco, to Laayoune and Dakhla in Western Sahara in April 2015.

7. The humanitarian situation in the refugee camps remained challenging. The severe living conditions, already affected by a continuing decrease in humanitarian aid, deteriorated further in October 2015 as a result of prolonged heavy rains that devastated the five camps, destroying many of the refugees' mud-brick homes, infrastructure and food supplies. The inter-agency appeal released for the emergency response received limited funding, allowing implementation of only part of the planned activities. Similarly, lack of funding continued to affect other regular refugee programmes in the camps.

8. From 16 to 22 December 2015, Frente Polisario organized its fourteenth General Peoples' Congress. On 23 December, Mohamed Abdelaziz was re-elected as Secretary-General of Frente Polisario. In January 2016, he appointed new officials in several domains. Following the passing of Frente Polisario Secretary-General Abdelaziz on 31 May 2016, the Polisario leadership announced a 40-day mourning period and started preparations for the organization of a congress to elect a new Secretary-General early in July 2016.

9. At my request, my Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, began to intensify his efforts through bilateral consultations and shuttle diplomacy to foster new ideas with a view to resuming the political negotiations between the parties. During the reporting period, he undertook four trips to the region: from 31 August to 10 September 2015; from 19 to 28 October 2015; from 22 to 30 November 2015; and from 16 to 25 February 2016.

10. In Rabat, Minister for Foreign Affairs Salaheddine Mezouar and other senior officials received my Personal Envoy. They introduced two of Morocco's long-standing positions as new ideas to be explored in shuttle diplomacy. In September 2015, they asked him to explore bringing Algeria to the table as a formal party in the negotiation process, maintaining that the continuation of the status quo was due to Algeria's absence. In October 2015, they suggested that he promote an exchange of views on self-determination. Mr. Mezouar encouraged my Personal Envoy to return to Rabat as often as he wished to continue his shuttle diplomacy. He further reiterated Morocco's commitment to the United Nations-led negotiating process. For his part, the new Minister-Delegate for Foreign Affairs, Nasser Bourita, affirmed that the process was based on the "2004 understanding", which, in his view, consisted of a political solution that did not bring the status of Western Sahara into question, given that "the Sahara is already Moroccan".

11. In Rabouni, Secretary-General Abdelaziz met my Personal Envoy in October 2015. He indicated that Frente Polisario was ready to enter negotiations on a more flexible basis if Morocco also showed similar flexibility. In his meetings with the Frente Polisario negotiating team, the latter dismissed both of Morocco's ideas for shuttle diplomacy, arguing that it sought to create confusion in the negotiating process and delay it further. They maintained that Morocco had effectively rejected the negotiating process since 2012 and lacked respect for the United Nations and Frente Polisario.

12. In Algeria, President Bouteflika confirmed that his country's position remained unchanged and reiterated that Algeria would accept any solution that Frente Polisario endorsed. Other interlocutors underscored that Algeria was not party to the Western Sahara conflict, rejecting Moroccan efforts to "bilateralize" the conflict as a "regional dispute" between Algeria and Morocco. In Nouakchott, my Personal Envoy met on two occasions with Prime Minister Yahya Ould Hademine, who reiterated his country's long-standing position of "positive neutrality" with regard to the Western Sahara negotiating process. The Prime Minister and other interlocutors further warned that the continuing stalemate risked undermining regional stability.

13. My Personal Envoy also visited Madrid, Paris, London and Washington, D.C. to continue his consultations with members of the Group of Friends on Western Sahara. He also met with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in New York.

14. Given the ongoing stalemate and my desire to visit MINURSO, I travelled to the region from 3 to 7 March 2016, visiting Nouakchott, the Smara refugee camp near Tindouf, Rabouni, the MINURSO team site in Bir Lahlou and Algiers. The visit had four objectives: (i) to make my own assessment and contribution to the search for a settlement; (ii) to visit MINURSO and pay tribute to its civilian personnel and military observers; (iii) to bear witness to the protracted humanitarian plight of the refugees; and (iv) to exchange views on other issues of mutual interest with relevant leaders.

15. In Nouakchott, Rabouni and Algiers, I held discussions with the leaders of Mauritania, Frente Polisario and Algeria on the status of the negotiating process and how to make progress. In the Smara refugee camp, I saw first-hand the deep emotions and profound frustrations resulting from more than 40 years of living without any prospect of a better future. With every interlocutor, I stressed the urgent need for progress towards a "mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara". I also committed myself to doing more to encourage greater humanitarian assistance for the camps.

16. On the occasion of my visit to the region, the Government of Morocco took strong exception to a number of my words and actions. On 16 March, the Permanent Mission of Morocco sent a list of 83 international civilian personnel of MINURSO and the African Union who were asked to leave within three days. The United Nations and African Union international civilian personnel on the list actually present in Laayoune, as well as their dependents, were temporarily reassigned from Laayoune to Las Palmas (Spain) or their home countries by 20 March. At the same time, Morocco signalled its unwillingness to receive my Personal Envoy and resume the negotiating process until the issues related to MINURSO were resolved.

17. On 29 April, the Security Council adopted resolution 2285 (2015) renewing the mandate of MINURSO for 12 months. The resolution emphasized the role of MINURSO in "recognizing the important role played by MINURSO on the ground and the need to fully implement its mandate" and hence "emphasizes the urgent need for MINURSO to return to full functionality". The Council also recognized the "importance of the parties committing to continue the negotiations process" and called them to continue negotiations "without preconditions and in good faith".

18. Following discussions between United Nations and Moroccan representatives in early June, an understanding on the return of MINURSO staff was reached. The implementation of the agreement was due to start in early July 2016 in order to ensure the Mission's return to full functionality.

19. Despite renewed efforts of the entire United Nations system, including through my personal engagement, I remain concerned over the continued lack of progress on the ground. I am convinced that the key issue at stake, the stalemate in the negotiating process, continues to hamper efforts in all other fields, including ensuring human rights protection, the economic integration of the region and cooperation in the fight against terrorism. It also continues to be a source of suffering on the ground for a refugee population that has lived in very challenging conditions for far too long. The frustration of the refugees, and in particular the youth, is mounting to an alarming degree. It remains essential to remind the parties, the neighbouring States and the international community of their respective responsibilities to find and foster progress toward a solution to the conflict. I therefore reiterate my call to the parties to move, with the assistance of the neighbouring countries, toward a solution without further delay and, to that end, urge them to engage in genuine negotiations with the support and facilitation of my Personal Envoy.

United Nations A/71/225

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 115 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 26 July 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to recall that the Republic of Croatia has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2017-2019, at the elections to be held during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, in October 2016.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia looks forward to contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council in an efficient, effective and constructive way, guided by a deep adherence to the universality, the indivisibility and the interdependence of all human rights, to fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, I have the honour to present herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 115 (d) of the provisional agenda.

* A/71/150.

16-13134 (E) 100816

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Annex to the note verbale dated 26 July 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the Republic of Croatia to the Human Rights Council, 2017-2019

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The protection and promotion of human rights remains a core commitment and a priority of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Guided by deep adherence to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, Croatia has presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019, and expresses its determination to further the work of the Human Rights Council in an efficient, effective and constructive way, if elected to serve on the Council for the first time since the Council's creation.

2. Croatia, as a new member of the Human Rights Council, will support good existing practices within the Council and will closely cooperate with other Council members and observers to strengthen confidence between all actors during deliberation of human rights issues. Croatia will promote and encourage respect for human rights, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, or on any other grounds. We will promote equality for all people and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

3. Croatia also remains determined to further develop its institutional and legal framework in the field of promotion and protection of human rights. In this regard, we will continue to improve and implement our national documents in this field, such as the national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights, national policy for gender equality, and the strategy for the promotion and protection of children's rights. We shall also implement United Nations treaty bodies recommendations and fulfil reporting obligations in a timely manner and participate in meaningful dialogue with respective committees. In meeting its international obligations in full protection of human rights, and further harmonizing national legislation with international standards and commitments, Croatia expresses its intention to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

4. Croatia reasserts the importance of the practical implementation of international human rights standards through the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations, resolutions and recommendations by the special procedures of the Council and the United Nations treaty bodies, and recognizes that the role of international standards is crucial for the progressive development of human rights law. Croatia has issued a standing invitation expressing its willingness to receive a visit from any thematic mandate holder.

5. Croatia has undergone two cycles of the universal periodic review, which have been carried out in a constructive and open spirit and debated with all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and national human rights

institutions, and which have been considered as important contributions to all national plans and strategies in the area of promotion and protection of human rights. Moreover, our responses have been additionally strengthened through recent consideration of national reports before United Nations treaty bodies (on children; disabilities; torture; and political rights).

6. Based on our own experience, Croatia firmly believes that the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations can be significantly supported following broad cooperation with civil society organizations and parliament committees, and that the implementation of assessments and recommendations made by international human rights bodies, including the universal periodic review, can be further strengthened by translating, publishing and making these available to the general public.

7. Croatia is committed to the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination, and is determined to tackle all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia on the national and international level. To combat inequality, discrimination and acts such as hate crime and hate speech, Croatia has adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which acts as a basis for the effective role of the Ombudsman. Based on its national human rights approach, Croatia is committed to advocate for the dignity of all human beings, cooperate with other United Nations members towards the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on freedom of religion or belief and landmark resolution 16/18 of the Council on combating religious intolerance, intensify efforts for the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and its Protocol, to which Croatia is also a party, continue to make all acts of hate crime more visible and to hold perpetrators accountable, in line with respecting the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination, and remain engaged in sharing good practices in addressing hate crimes.

8. Croatia can serve as an example for multi-institutional cooperation in addressing hate crimes by the establishment of the Working Group for Monitoring Hate Crime Incidents, coordinated by the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, a central body for the collection and publishing of data on hate crime and monitoring the human rights situation in the country in general.

9. Croatia welcomes the transformative action to mainstream gender equality into all three pillars of the United Nations, peace and security, human rights and development, actively participates in the New York-based Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, supports the mandate and the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and remains actively engaged in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda of the Security Council. We remain committed to continuous implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and associated resolutions, especially through our national plan and to direct contribution to United Nations peacekeeping. Adequate representation of female personnel is a crucial element in our efforts to combat sexual violence, promote gender awareness among the host nations' populations and improve relationships between peacekeepers and local citizens. To contribute to this goal, Croatia has organized two United Nations training courses (one in May 2015 and another in April 2016) for female police officers from several countries of Asia and Africa as predeployment preparation for peacekeeping operations. During 2016 Croatia is presiding over the Equal Futures Partnership initiative, thus committing itself to promote in particular women's political

participation and their position in the labour market and is actively contributing to the empowerment of women nationally and internationally.

10. Croatia actively promotes the rights of the child and traditionally supports all resolutions that focus on different aspects of the child's protection, including in armed conflict. Croatia signed the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on communications procedure, supports all human rights resolutions that focus on different aspects of the child's protection, adopted the Paris Commitments and Principles and will further pay attention to the needs of children and their vulnerabilities during and after armed conflict.

11. Croatia is dedicated to multilateral cooperation to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict, considers the full implementation and respect of international humanitarian law as crucial in this regard and will continue to be devoted to addressing the issue of disappearances in conflict, based on our successful cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Council's Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. We support the role of the International Criminal Court as indispensable to further protection of civilians in conflict, being among the first countries in the world to ratify the Kampala Amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

12. Croatia is deeply committed to fostering the rights of refugees and migrants, and upholds the principle of sharing responsibility in order to achieve effective cooperation. In our view, the protection of refugees is both a moral and legal obligation for all Member States, whereby the principles of humanity, the sharing of responsibility and solidarity must be upheld. Croatia aims to ensure that the attention in migration crises is given to vulnerable people, such as children, pregnant women and victims of trafficking in human beings and torture. Croatia will foster and welcome initiatives and discussions on addressing the root causes of migration, and will keep its proactive stance in resolving those causes in partnership with affected States.

13. Croatia advocates the humanitarian aspects of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which has established high standards for assistance to cluster munitions victims, their socioeconomic reintegration and enhancing local and regional capacities, and had the honour to host its First Review Conference in September 2015 in Dubrovnik. We also actively support the Montreux Document.

14. Croatia presents its resolution on conscientious objection to military service every four years and assembles the like-minded states on this matter.

15. Croatia advocates for a vibrant, independent, open and protected civil society at the United Nations, and at the national level, and recognizes the work of human rights defenders for international peace and security. We acknowledge the advisory capacity of the civil society organizations and institutions in recognizing and remedying human rights violations across the globe.

16. Croatia is committed to invest all of its efforts for better human rights protection and improved work of human rights institutions, if elected to serve on the Human Rights Council in the term 2017-2019. Extending its pledges and commitments, the Republic of Croatia undertakes to:

(a) Continue to actively support the balanced, credible and effective work of the Council and its mechanisms, as it has since its establishment;

(b) Cooperate with the Council and take active part in the promotion of universal respect for all human rights for all persons and its further development;

(c) Strengthen the leadership of the Council to work without selectivity and provide timely and efficient response to gross and systematic human rights violations, and support the development of early-warning mechanisms at the Council to address crisis situations at their inception;

(d) Participate in the elaboration of new human rights standards by its own experience, initiatives and good human rights practice;

(e) Remain engaged in the Council's efforts to provide technical assistance and capacity-building for all countries in need;

(f) Support the system of special procedures and closely cooperate with the thematic procedures to which it has extended a standing invitation;

(g) Support the reform and work of treaty bodies and their cooperation with the Council and its mechanisms;

(h) Remain committed to the universal periodic review in order to preserve its universality and value of its recommendations, at the same time contributing actively to the dialogue with countries under review, as well as engage in enhancing the ability of the Council to address the need of Member States to effectively implement universal periodic review and special procedures' recommendations and resolutions;

(i) Enhance genuine dialogue with all Council Member States with the aim of achieving progress in human rights protection;

(j) Remain dedicated to multilateral cooperation to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict and the full implementation and respect of international humanitarian law;

(k) Remain committed to fostering the rights of refugees and migrants, and uphold the principle of sharing responsibility in order to achieve effective cooperation;

(l) Support mainstreaming of human rights into all aspects of United Nations activities, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(m) Put a particular focus on the protection of the rights of women and the rights of most vulnerable groups (children, migrants and civilians in armed conflict);

(n) Support gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, including the role of gender officers in the United Nations peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding activities;

(o) Support the valuable contributions by civil society organizations and national human rights institutions to the work of all United Nations bodies and agencies;

(p) Continue its close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

(q) Remain fully committed to the request that Member States elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion, the protection and the further development of human rights.

United Nations A/71/226

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 134 of the provisional agenda*
Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Ninth progress report on the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards by the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The ninth progress report of the Secretary-General on the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) focuses on IPSAS sustainability and details the ongoing work to support the five pillars identified as central to the long-term sustainability of IPSAS compliance. In particular, the report addresses the strengthening of internal controls, IPSAS benefits realization and the strengthening of Umoja as the backbone for IPSAS-compliant accounting and reporting. The report also introduces the plan to institutionalize the United Nations IPSAS project by 31 December 2017. At the United Nations system-wide level, the report sets out the efforts to achieve increased harmonization of IPSAS-compliant accounting and reporting across United Nations system organizations, as well as collaboration platforms and tools to share information and best practices.

The United Nations Secretariat became IPSAS-compliant in 2014, both for peacekeeping and non-peacekeeping operations. The second round of IPSAS-compliant financial statements (2015) was produced with a combination of Umoja, legacy systems and manual processes. The 2016 financial statements will be produced largely from Umoja, except for equipment and inventory in field missions, for which related information will continue to be sourced from Galileo records.

In July 2015, the Management Committee endorsed a five-pillar plan to support IPSAS sustainability, which is aimed at ensuring that IPSAS compliance can be maintained, and to support the use of IPSAS-triggered information to better manage the Organization. Progress has been made in introducing a Statement on Internal Controls, the ongoing work on the IPSAS policy framework, corporate guidance and the Finance Manual, the management of IPSAS benefits and the deployment of Umoja to support asset accounting in field missions. The IPSAS team is driving the implementation of the sustainability plan and the residual functions of the team will be institutionalized by the end of 2017.

* A/71/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In 2006, the General Assembly, by its resolution 60/283, approved the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) for presentation of the financial statements of the United Nations. Beginning in 2008, the Secretary-General has submitted annual progress reports (A/62/806, A/64/355, A/65/308, A/66/379, A/67/344, A/68/351, A/69/367 and A/70/329) on IPSAS adoption to the General Assembly.

2. As at the end of 2014, the United Nations Secretariat and all United Nations system organizations had presented IPSAS-compliant financial statements. At the Secretariat, all the financial statements for 2014 and the 2015 financial statements for the peacekeeping operations received unqualified audit opinions; the audits of the 2015 non-peacekeeping financial statements are still in progress, but the indications are that the audit opinions will be unqualified.

3. As the Organization changed to IPSAS-compliant accounting and reporting, major changes included recognition of property, plant and equipment, inventories, intangible assets, employee benefit liabilities and liabilities for claims against the Organization; investments were marked to market and allowance accounts were created against doubtful accounts receivables. Regarding revenue, the Organization recognized revenue from in-kind contributions and changed the revenue recognition point for non-exchange revenue from receipt of funds to signature of the arrangements. Expenses are now recorded in the financial statements when goods and/or services have been received, not when commitments have been made, and depreciation expense is recorded to show the consumption of the service potential of assets that have been capitalized.

4. Regarding note disclosures in the financial statements, some of the new areas include segment reporting, reporting of explanations of material budget versus actual variances, reporting on key management personnel, reporting on details of employee benefit liabilities, reporting on details of the lifecycle of property, plant and equipment and reporting on investment risks. This new information triggered by the move to IPSAS-compliance is progressively being used in decision-making.

5. The present report outlines progress in the post-IPSAS implementation phase and focuses on the sustainability of IPSAS compliance at the Secretariat and throughout the United Nations system during the period from 1 September 2015 to 31 August 2016.

6. In addition, the report details ongoing work in the five pillars identified as central to the long-term sustainability of IPSAS compliance; the five pillars were detailed in the IPSAS sustainability plan approved by the Management Committee in July 2015. The progress made at the United Nations Secretariat is set out in section II below, followed by system-wide progress in section III, the streamlining of IPSAS processes in section IV and actions to be taken by the General Assembly in section V.

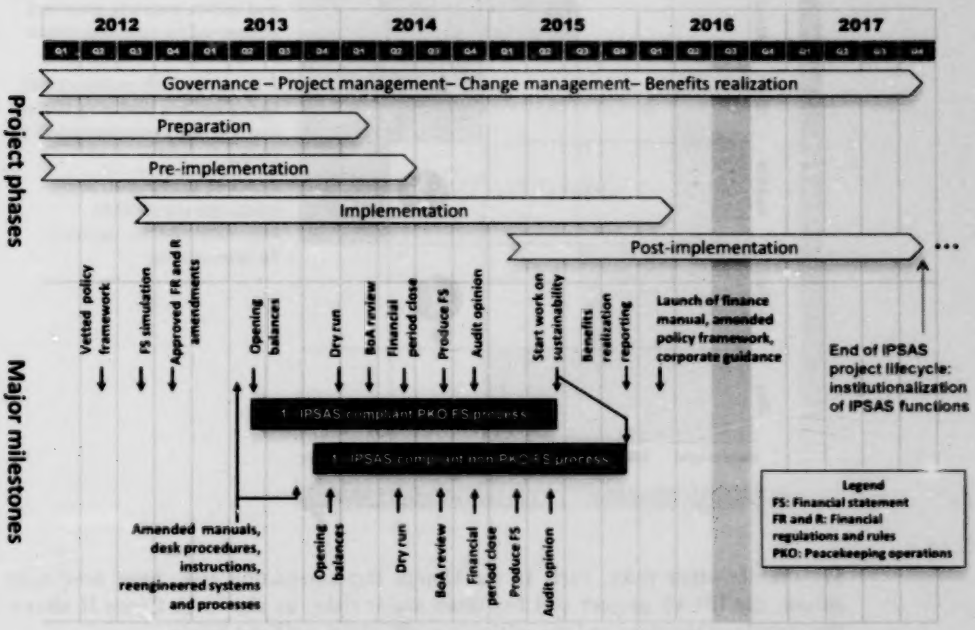
II. Sustaining compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards at the United Nations

A. Overview

7. As can be seen from figure I below, the United Nations IPSAS project is now in its post-implementation phase, with a focus on sustainability activities, as outlined in the IPSAS sustainability plan comprising five work pillars. The components of the plan were presented to the General Assembly in the previous progress report (A/70/329).

8. The present report outlines the progress achieved under the five pillars of sustainability efforts and sets out the plan to institutionalize the residual functions of the IPSAS project team in the operations of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts as the project draws to an end by the end of 2017.

Figure I
Project phases and major milestones



B. Governance and project oversight

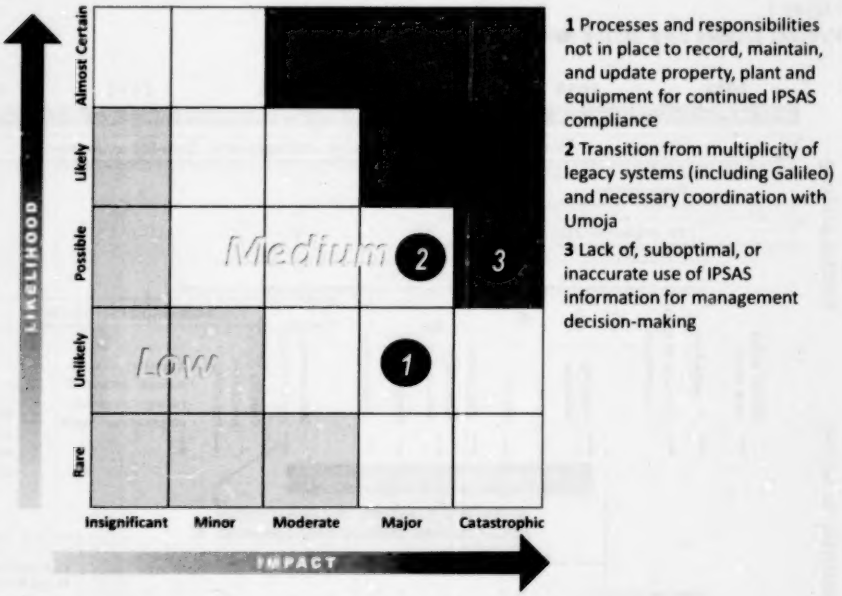
9. The IPSAS Steering Committee will continue to meet on a quarterly basis through the end of the project lifecycle, December 2017, to review progress and manage risks. In August 2015, the terms of reference of the Committee were updated to focus on the sustainability deliverables of moving from legacy systems to Umoja as the book of record for recording transactions and preparing financial statements; securing long-term sustainability for IPSAS compliance, especially with

regard to training and institutional support; analysing financial information; addressing how to raise the level of financial management knowledge across the Organization; and working with the IPSAS Board, the Board of Auditors and internal stakeholders.

10. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee will continue to assist the General Assembly in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities on IPSAS-related issues until the end of the project lifecycle. The project assurance role will continue through the end of the project lifecycle to gauge performance and verify whether deliverables meet the defined requirements and are fit for purpose and that tangible progress is being made towards realizing IPSAS benefits.

C. Risk management

Figure II
Heat map of IPSAS sustainability risks



11. While other risks, such as the Umoja implementation risk, have now been closed, the IPSAS project still has three major risks, as shown in figure II above. The details of the risks and the mitigation efforts are outlined below.

12. Property management and its impact on asset accounting is an area of concern, given that there is a lack of sufficient knowledge and documented processes. To address this major risk, a property management initiative led by the Office of Central Support Services in coordination with the IPSAS team was launched to identify and address the major challenges faced by offices and field missions post-IPSAS and Umoja implementation in key property management/asset accounting areas, in order to safeguard the sustainability of IPSAS compliance.

Seven three-day workshops were delivered, in New York, Geneva, Brindisi, Italy, Nairobi, Beirut, Santiago and Entebbe, Uganda. Staff from more than 35 duty stations attended, including field missions, Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and the tribunals, with over 150 staff members participating in the workshops.

13. The recommendations of the property management outreach initiative are threefold and involve the property management framework, the community and staff resources. The property management framework needs to be reinforced by ensuring that processes and procedures for key property management areas are developed and supported by training, community-building and guidance. There is also a need to integrate the property management functions through a change in thinking, culture and ways of working. In terms of staffing resources, the property management structure needs to be reviewed and staff resourcing issues addressed with the expeditious filling of the Fixed Asset Management Officer positions where vacant.

14. Another major risk to IPSAS sustainability is the continued use of the legacy system Galileo for asset accounting in the field missions; that risk is being addressed through the Galileo decommissioning project was launched in December 2015. The project team, supported by Umoja business analysts, completed the plan analysis phase of the project in January 2016. Data conversion and deployment are expected to be carried out up to the middle of the third quarter of 2017, after which Galileo is expected to be decommissioned and Umoja asset accounting is expected to be deployed to all field missions. Until the deployment, estimated values will continue to be used for equipment and inventory in the financial statements. Through its participation in the Umoja Steering Committee, the IPSAS project team has been actively involved and is tracking the progress in this deployment.

15. A new risk identified is the lack or suboptimal use of IPSAS information for management decision-making. This risk is being mitigated through: (a) the planned launch of the Finance Manual and upcoming deployment of training on financial statement analysis; and (b) the capture and analysis of how IPSAS information is being used and the strengthening of the finance analytical function in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts.

D. Sustainability of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards

16. As detailed in the previous progress report, five major components have been identified as the core pillars of the sustainability efforts. These sustainability pillars, which are currently being rolled out, include the management of IPSAS benefits; the strengthening of internal controls, leading to the issuance of a Statement on Internal Controls; the management of the IPSAS regulatory framework; the strengthening of Umoja as the backbone for IPSAS-compliant accounting and reporting; and training and skills development. Following are highlights on progress in each of the pillars and the results achieved so far:

IPSAS benefits management

17. Since its inception, the benefits realization pillar has advanced significantly in all five major benefit categories, identified as alignment with best practice; improved stewardship of assets and liabilities; more comprehensive cost information; improved consistency and comparability; and enhanced transparency

and accountability. The five benefit categories have been broken down further into 15 individual envisaged benefit areas. One or several key performance indicators have been attached to each benefit to facilitate monitoring and verifying progress.

18. In order to effectively collect information from departments, offices and missions across the Organization, a reporting mechanism translating key performance indicators into actionable activities and information requirements was put in place as part of the deployment of the sustainability plan. IPSAS focal point managers regularly provide qualitative and quantitative results using this mechanism with biannual summary reporting to the IPSAS Steering Committee.

Benefits realization approach

19. Since the previous progress report, the IPSAS team has continued to monitor and report on the realization of IPSAS benefits by departments, offices and field missions across the Organization. The contribution to IPSAS sustainability efforts, including benefits realization and management, remained part of the senior manager compacts during the reporting period, enhancing accountability and ensuring management attention.

20. Based on comments provided during the first reporting cycle, in August 2015, the IPSAS benefits tracking mechanism was revised to simplify the reporting process and improve data collection, verification and summary reporting. A series of videoconference training sessions were conducted to clarify tracking and reporting requirements and increase awareness of the importance of the IPSAS benefits realization efforts among reporting managers. Further, the IPSAS benefits realization awareness training referred to under the skills development pillar was deployed.

21. A second IPSAS benefits realization reporting cycle was launched in February 2016 and concluded in June. As a result of the improved reporting mechanism and multiple training sessions, the response rate of offices reached almost 100 per cent and the quality of data provided improved, which jointly allowed for a positive assessment of the impact of IPSAS on various areas of activities.

IPSAS benefits realized

Category A: Alignment with best practices

22. Since the adoption of IPSAS in financial year 2014, the United Nations Secretariat has received clean audit opinions for all of the 13 sets of financial statements.[1] This signifies a major accomplishment for the Organization and provides assurance to all stakeholders that IPSAS-compliant accounting policies and processes are robust.

23. The achievement of clean audit opinions by the Organization's reporting entities is clear evidence of IPSAS compliance and alignment with best practice in financial reporting. This is clear confirmation of having realized the first IPSAS

[1] The United Nations produces 13 financial statements, as follows: Volume I: Non-peacekeeping activities, volume II: Peacekeeping operations, International Trade Centre, United Nations University, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations Compensation Commission, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Tribunals (International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia) and United Nations Escrow Account.

benefit of alignment with best international practice for accounting and reporting. This validation by external oversight bodies not only demonstrates improved quality of financial reporting but also enhances its credibility.

24. The number of transitional provisions applied in the preparation of the financial statements was kept to a minimum, with their planned phasing out within the timeline as set out in IPSAS requirements.

25. The ability to timely submit IPSAS-compliant financial statements, effective collaboration with external auditors and the comments received from offices validate the competency and robustness of both the staff and processes in place for the sustainability of IPSAS compliance at the Organization.

Category B: Improved stewardship of assets and liabilities

26. The Organization's processes in asset management significantly improved following the implementation of IPSAS. Offices across the Secretariat reported almost 100 per cent asset verification rates, confirming that asset holdings are accurately reflected in the accounting records and financial statements. Under asset management, multiple examples of more rigorous control of asset holdings owing to better data visibility have been reported, with levels of assets being reviewed regularly. Several missions reported on efforts to decrease the level of inventories and demonstrated changes in holdings since the first year of IPSAS adoption. At the same time, it should be noted that those efforts cannot be fully attributed to IPSAS alone but, in several instances, are a combination of factors, namely, changes made in the context of the Global Field Support Strategy, Umoja and supply chain initiatives. IPSAS has nevertheless heightened the visibility of those issues and triggered related management actions.

27. Offices started to pay more attention to after-service health insurance liabilities accrued and started setting aside funding related to extrabudgetary-funded activities following the IPSAS requirement to reflect all outstanding after-service health insurance liabilities in the financial statements. The Secretariat, as a next step, is developing policies, which will ensure that funding is set aside for extrabudgetary-related after-service health insurance liabilities on an organization-wide basis.

28. IPSAS requirements have also triggered more comprehensive documentation and rigorous review of outstanding legal claims when reporting on provisions and contingent liabilities. Analysis showed that, in some cases, initially assumed potential obligations of the Organization could be decreased by 60 to 80 per cent after the review by legal officers and the IPSAS team for proper reflection in the financial statements, setting the stage for better planning and budgeting. Reporting on disciplinary cases also leads to better management and effective implementation of management decisions.

Category C: Availability of more comprehensive cost information

29. Reporters on IPSAS benefits became more active in reviewing unliquidated obligations/commitments and outstanding receivables as a result of IPSAS requirements and increased visibility of data via Umoja, thereby improving budgetary management. Offices also showed better budget consumption and were able to enhance their processes to manage the gap between the amounts appropriated and those actually spent. In terms of improved financial management

practices as a whole, reporters specified improved asset management, better budget consumption, expenditure visibility and better understanding of an entity's financial position owing to the combined effect of IPSAS and Umoja. Further improvements are expected after Umoja reaches its full functionality.

Category D: Improved consistency and comparability

30. In the consistency and comparability category, trends will become clearer after IPSAS has been consistently applied for a longer period of time. An important factor will be to increase the use of IPSAS-related information and financial indicators by senior management for decision-making purposes.

Category E: Increased transparency and accountability

31. Under improved transparency and accountability, reporting managers provided multiple examples of how day-to-day operations of programme managers have changed in the new accounting environment. Most of them are related to better visibility of the programme financial position, available assets and cash flow. Additionally, missions provided assurances that, with the help of the monthly closing report, they were able to regularly review their financial management practices.

Conclusion of benefits realization

32. The impact of IPSAS is evident from the multiple qualitative improvements in the way the Organization is managed. Anecdotal evidence also showed some quantitative impact over time related to asset adjustments and better management of provisions.

33. Based on analysis of the reported data, some benefits and key performance indicators originally envisaged in the forward-looking IPSAS benefits realization plan, which was developed and implemented concurrently with the first year of the adoption of IPSAS, proved to be of less importance at this stage and will be either reformulated or discontinued. Consequently, reporting and tracking will be adjusted as needed.

34. Following the request by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/262, the IPSAS team identified an additional benefit relating to assets provided by host countries to peacekeeping missions and other United Nations offices. According to IPSAS requirements, assets that have been donated to the Organization are recognized as contributions in kind in the financial statements. When title is transferred without restrictions, assets are treated as United Nations-owned assets and reported accordingly. However, when only the right to use the assets is donated to the Organization without granting of ownership, the arrangement is treated similarly to an operational lease and the rental value equivalent of the underlying asset is treated as revenue and expense; when the right to use the assets is donated for a long term, the arrangement is treated similarly to a finance lease. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the Organization's assets and liabilities as well as its revenue and expenses.

Strengthening internal controls

35. During the reporting period, the Organization updated its original plans as described in the previous progress report (see A/70/329, paras. 49-51) and defined

its approach to strengthening internal controls. The approach, which will be based on an organization-wide assurance process supporting the issuance of a Statement on Internal Controls, will require all heads of departments, offices and missions to submit an annual assurance statement to the Controller affirming that internal controls are present and functioning in their respective areas of responsibilities. Managers will be supported in their efforts by self-assessment checklists, communication and training materials, as well as hands-on training in assessing internal controls locally. As indicated in the previous report, the integrated internal control framework of the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission will serve as the conceptual framework when defining the internal control components and control activities for the mitigation of related risks.

36. When defining the Organization's approach and its implementation strategy and plan, a lessons learned exercise was performed by assessing the experiences gained by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which were the first United Nations system entities to implement a Statement on Internal Controls, and by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, which started its approach in 2015, in order to identify best practices that could be applied to the United Nations.

37. Given that enterprise risk management and internal controls are two integrated areas, an assessment of how risk information generated during the assurance process could be integrated into the overall enterprise risk management approach was performed in order to ensure alignment.

38. The immediate next steps will require setting the Organization's internal control objectives, defining content for the self-assessment checklists and assurance statements based on a mapping of existing internal controls against the requirements of the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission, informed by the most recent and recurrent audit findings, and taking into account existing system controls in Umoja as well as management judgement on internal control requirements and effectiveness.

39. As initially planned, this phase will be followed by a pilot exercise, planned for late 2016, in selected peacekeeping missions in order to test the assurance process and deliverables, which will lead to further refinements prior to the full roll-out to peacekeeping in early 2017 and to non-peacekeeping entities in the fall of 2017. The roll-out will be accompanied by on-site training in all major locations, combining, to the extent possible, several entities in one training event.

40. Depending on the results of the initial assurance process, the issuance of a Statement on Internal Controls is being considered to accompany the financial statements for the financial year 2016/17 for peacekeeping operations and for the financial year 2017 for the non-peacekeeping operations.

Managing the regulatory framework

41. Maintaining an up-to-date IPSAS regulatory framework requires a dedicated process to validate all newly developed policy documents and process all changes to existing regulatory and procedural documents with potential impact on the regulatory framework. This is part of the sustainability efforts for IPSAS compliance that will be institutionalized in the operations of the Accounts Division by the end of 2017.

42. The current workplan of the IPSAS Board contains a significant number of issues that have implications for financial reporting at the United Nations. It therefore needs close monitoring and active participation to influence the outcome and prepare for any necessary changes to the IPSAS policy framework, Umoja and other processes and procedures. Below are the major areas for which standards are being developed or considered for change:

(a) Financial reporting for heritage items: This is a new standard being developed, with significant implications for financial reporting owing to the high volume of such items held by the United Nations. Currently, IPSAS does not require heritage items to be recognized on the financial statements and any inclusion by disclosure is optional. However, the proposed standard would make the inclusion of any such items in the financial statements mandatory. The scope and coverage of such items is still under discussion. The current workplan shows projected approval of a final standard in the second half of 2019;

(b) Revenue and non-exchange expenses: The IPSAS Board is looking at the exchange (earned) and non-exchange (assessed and voluntary contributions) revenue and coming up with further changes to or replacements for IPSAS 9 and 23, reflecting the complexities of the project. Approval to start the consultation paper will be in December 2016. This area has significant implications for the Organization given that a significant amount of revenue comes from non-exchange transactions and a significant amount is spent on non-exchange expenses; the latter area has no single specific standard. It is therefore vital that the United Nations monitor and participate in the development of standards in this area;

(c) Leases: The approval of an exposure draft is projected for March 2017, which will cover complex issues of sale and leaseback transactions, lessor accounting and nominal or donated right-to-use arrangements, which are prevalent in the United Nations;

(d) Employee benefits: A new standard dealing with financial reporting of employee benefits, including actuarial gains or losses, was approved; the standard will become effective from 1 January 2018;

(e) Accounting for public sector combinations:

A standard is under development, with an exposure draft issued in 2016; the work of the Board in this area will impact the combining of the operations of the Tribunals (the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda).

43. The IPSAS Board continues to develop and update standards that have an impact on IPSAS compliance by the United Nations, hence, the need to have dedicated resources to monitor and participate in the process in order to sustain IPSAS compliance. Any new IPSAS requirements have to be translated into changes to the IPSAS policy framework, corporate guidance, Finance Manual and other operational and procedural documents and may result in changes to Umoja accounting processes.

Strengthening of Umoja as the backbone for IPSAS-compliant accounting and reporting

44. The continued strengthening of Umoja is crucial to long-term IPSAS sustainability. The IPSAS team will continue to play a major role in the following areas for IPSAS sustainability in the Organization: continued development of the IPSAS/Umoja Finance Manual; the automation of the financial statement process; and the plan to deploy Umoja for asset accounting in the field missions.

Finance Manual

45. Work on the Finance Manual continued during the reporting period. The Finance Manual combines IPSAS policies with step-by-step Umoja processes to educate finance users not only on IPSAS requirements but also on the practical steps to complete an IPSAS-compliant transaction in Umoja.

46. A website has been developed to host the Finance Manual. This allows the manual to be clickable, searchable and user-friendly. The manual covers the various Umoja modules that capture transactions and are the bedrock for IPSAS financial reporting. At completion, the manual will have a dedicated chapter on the financial statements automation process.

47. As Umoja evolves and more finance processes are added to it, the Finance Manual will be updated; work on the manual is therefore expected to be ongoing. The first version of the Finance Manual will be launched by the end of 2016.

Automation of the financial statements (Business Planning and Consolidation module)

48. The Umoja financial statements preparation sub-project was launched to automate the process of financial statement preparation via an Umoja solution. The scope of the project is to add as much automation as possible to the production of all the financial statements for the United Nations Secretariat reporting entities that are in Umoja. The first set of official financial statements to be generated from Umoja will be for peacekeeping operations (United Nations volume II) for the financial period ended 30 June 2016. This solution being implemented for the automation of the financial statements preparation is called the Business Planning and Consolidation module.

49. The purpose of Business Planning and Consolidation is to automate and speed up the close of the financial period. It offers the possibility of standardizing the process of financial statement preparation. Because Business Planning and Consolidation has a central database, no stand-alone spreadsheets will be required during the process of financial statement preparation. The user interface is intuitive given that Business Planning and Consolidation is accessed mainly through Microsoft Excel. The financial statements and the notes will be developed in Business Planning and Consolidation. It contains tools to execute currency translation, perform inter-entity eliminations and to run controls to ensure consistency of data.

50. At the end of 2015, the first Business Planning and Consolidation prototype was developed containing the Statements of Financial Position and Financial Performance for volume II based on data in the development system. Subsequently, a combined blueprint for the financial statements of volumes I and II was developed, taking into consideration, to the extent possible, the requirements of the

other reporting entities, in order to standardize the process and output of the financial statements wherever possible across the various financial statements of the Secretariat reporting entities.

51. The benefits of Business Planning and Consolidation include a streamlined process for consolidated financial statements underpinned by a centralized data repository of Business Planning and Consolidation with up-to-date Umoja data. The Organization will have access to harmonized financial statements and notes tables. It is expected to reduce the time spent on consolidation and elimination processes.

52. Business Planning and Consolidation will produce clear and transparent financial statements and notes through an automated process centrally controlled at Headquarters. This process will ensure that all data and adjustments to be uploaded are fully documented and stored with a distinctive audit trail in the Business Planning and Consolidation system. Hence, Business Planning and Consolidation will provide a single, centralized view of Umoja data and generates clearer and more transparent financial statements and notes.

53. To date, 49 reports have been built for volume II, covering the financial statements and the notes as well as the necessary forms for manual data input where necessary, system controls for data consistency and elimination rules. The Umoja Business Planning and Consolidation functionality is expected to go live by the end of July 2016 for the production of the volume II financial statements as at 30 June 2016.

54. The next phase of the automation of the financial statements has already started and it is envisaged that Business Planning and Consolidation for volume I and the financial statements of eight other Secretariat reporting entities that are in Umoja will be implemented by the end of 2016.

Plan to deploy Umoja for asset accounting in field missions

55. Umoja has been progressively rolled out across the United Nations Secretariat. Umoja records all information regarding fixed assets (defined as property, plant and equipment under IPSAS), equipment masters (items below the capitalization thresholds) and inventory in Umoja for cluster 3 and 4 entities.

56. Although field missions use the Umoja fixed asset sub-ledger to record cost, accumulated depreciation and useful life for real estate and infrastructure assets, they currently are still using a legacy system to track detailed information (including cost, depreciation and useful life) in relation to equipment assets and assets under construction. Galileo is used by field missions to track information related to equipment assets and a file is prepared from Galileo with cost and accumulated depreciation information for financial statements preparation. Assets under construction are managed on spreadsheets using detailed costing information.

57. The Umoja fixed asset sub-ledger contains information on each individual asset, including cost, depreciation and useful life. Assets are automatically recorded upon receipt based on the material master used during the procurement process, which also classifies the item correctly into its property, plant and equipment sub-class. Further, Umoja calculates and centrally posts depreciation in accordance with the IPSAS policy framework.

58. The envisaged deployment of Umoja to peacekeeping and special political missions for property, plant and equipment and inventory assets is the next major

undertaking where the expertise of the IPSAS team will be required. The equipment and inventory assets in both peacekeeping and special political missions are currently managed in Galileo; the real estate (building and infrastructure) assets in those missions are managed in Umoja, but the related transactions are not processed using its full functionality. A comprehensive project plan covering the resource requirements, time frames, data conversion strategies and methods has been developed.

59. In September 2017, all fixed assets will be migrated into Umoja; the number of assets expected to be converted is around 73,000 individual items. The Galileo decommissioning project has been tasked with data cleansing and the development of the system enhancements necessary before conversion. After conversion is complete, all future purchases of fixed assets will be automatically capitalized and the appropriate asset master created automatically in the system; depreciation will then be run centrally and manual adjustments outside the fixed asset sub-ledger to property, plant and equipment for mission assets will no longer be necessary. The conversion of these balances will provide visibility on fixed asset balances on the Statement of Financial Position in real time, allowing more effective monitoring. That should lead to efficiency gains in the management of assets given that detailed information will be easily and centrally available for financial, budgetary and operational purposes.

60. The full Umoja assets under construction solution is also to be rolled out to field missions in September 2017. Once rolled out, the manual processes to capitalize assets under construction balances can be discontinued and missions will be able to track such balances using cost collectors set up with investment profiles and run the settlement to capitalize monthly.

61. It is also worthwhile noting that all field mission inventory balances (including strategic deployment stocks) will also be migrated to Umoja in September 2017. In accordance with the Galileo decommissioning project data conversion strategy, all Galileo material records will be migrated to Umoja and financial assets will be fully converted in accordance with Umoja data conversion standards. The decommissioning project team expects to migrate/convert nearly 31,000 material types/records with a historical value of $3.1 billion (including financial and non-financial inventory balances). These balances are currently posted manually in Umoja for financial statement reporting based on information from Galileo. All items operationally stored as inventory will be recorded as inventory and an adjustment will be recorded for financial statement purposes to reclassify non-financial inventory. Having detailed information regarding inventory balances by plant location will allow the Organization to have in-depth information regarding the division of financial and non-financial inventory centrally available and to ensure that the information is available readily for financial statement reporting and budgeting purposes.

62. The conversion of equipment and inventory assets to Umoja, the decommissioning of Galileo and the processing of real estate transactions using the full functionality of Umoja requires resources with expertise in IPSAS and Umoja. In that respect, the IPSAS team is expected to play a vital role in ensuring that the conversion is carried out in line with IPSAS requirements.

Training and skills development

63. Each IPSAS sustainability pillar is supported by skills development to build the technical expertise to apply IPSAS and to support financial reporting in compliance with IPSAS.

64. Following a comparison of the programmes offered by different international professional accounting bodies and based on the experience of other United Nations system organizations, the Organization decided to implement the International Public Financial Management professional certification offered by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The certification has been successfully implemented in six United Nations system organizations (United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization, UNESCO, WFP and United Nations Population Fund) following different approaches in terms of (a) the number of modules studied each year; (b) the exemptions on study modules for professionals who already have an accountancy designation from another professional accounting body; and (c) the profile of the staff allowed to enrol in the programme. Successful completion of the International Public Financial Management qualification leads to full Chartered Public Finance Accountant status. Based on the high exigency that the qualification places on learners, the full programme is equivalent to a Master's degree, which can be achieved in approximately three years.

65. In order to design the best path to implementation, a pilot was initiated in September 2015. For the pilot, two staff members of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts enrolled in the programme starting at the certificate level and two staff members sought exemptions to start at a more advanced level. With the experience gained from the pilot, a wider implementation will be the focus in the upcoming months. Main activities already under way are: (a) the establishment of the internal structure that will manage the logistics of the programme; and (b) work on satisfying the requirements to establish a procurement contract with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Subsequent activities will include the socialization of the qualification among offices to promote the nomination of candidates to participate in the programme and active engagement to advance towards full certification.

66. Additionally, the following capacity-building activities were conducted during the reporting period: (a) advanced training on financial statement preparation aimed at senior finance officers and key finance personnel from special political missions and offices away from Headquarters, held in New York in December 2015, with the attendance of more than 100 people between participants and presenters from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and the Umoja team; (b) one financial statement preparation workshop held in Entebbe, Uganda in June 2016 for finance and budget officers from peacekeeping operations, jointly facilitated by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts/Accounts Division and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts/Peacekeeping Financing Division; and (c) seven workshops to further rationalize the approach to property management by leveraging the Umoja and IPSAS initiatives and building capacity to mainstream the newly available property management framework of policy, guidance, training and certification.

67. Lastly, one computer-based training activity on the importance of benefits realization was launched and is currently available in Inspira, while the content of a computer-based training activity on IPSAS awareness had been developed and is

awaiting technical development by the Office of Information and Communications Technology.

E. Project budget and expenditure

68. The General Assembly, by its resolution 60/283, approved the resources for the implementation of IPSAS.

69. The United Nations IPSAS team comprises three funded from the regular budget[2] and four general temporary assistance positions under the support account for peacekeeping operations. Additionally, a team of consultants supports the sustainability activities of the IPSAS project and the work towards institutionalizing them.

70. The table below presents a breakdown by funding source of the initial appropriations and expenditures for the biennium 2016-2017 as at 30 June 2016. The IPSAS implementation project indicative budget of $27 million, prior to the detailed planning of the sustainability activities, comprises $12.8 million from the support account, $10 million from the regular budget and $4.2 million from extrabudgetary resources (see A/67/564, para. 17). The expenditure to 30 June 2016 is $24 million, excluding $4.2 million cumulative expenditures under extrabudgetary funds. An additional $2.5 million has been approved under the 2016/2017 support account, in combination with the already approved $1.24 million regular budget resources for the 2016-2017 period.

Project budget and expenditure for IPSAS adoption at the United Nations

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Object of expenditure	*Expenditure[a] 2006-2013*	*Expenditure 2014-2015*	*Initial appropriation 2016-2017*	*Expenditure[a,b] as at 30 June 2016*	*Total expenditure 2006-2016*
Regular budget					
Posts	3 968.7	1 270.4	938.8	216.2	5 455.3
General temporary assistance	944.2	–	5.1	–	944.2
Consultants	272.9	–	–	1.1	274.0
Travel	282.7	31.1	89.0	2.9	316.7
Contractual services	51.5	22.5	22.0	–	74.0
Other	101.5	80.4	23.7	23.3	205.2
Section 29B Office of Programme Planning Budget and Accounts	**5 621.5**	**1 404.4**	**1 078.6**	**243.5**	**7 269.4**
Section 32, Jointly financed activities	1 710.9	237.1	161.7	–	1 948.0
Subtotal	**7 332.4**	**1 641.5**	**1 240.3**	**243.5**	**9 217.4**
Support account for peacekeeping operations					
General temporary assistance	2 831.9	1 828.7	1 375.3	401.3	5 061.9
Consultants	5 467.4	2 438.7	3 284.0	554.5	8 460.6

[2] Four posts until December 2015, when one P-3 post was abolished.

Object of expenditure	*Expenditure[a] 2006-2013*	*Expenditure 2014-2015*	*Initial appropriation 2016-2017*	*Expenditure[a,b] as at 30 June 2016*	*Total expenditure 2006-2016*
Travel	396.8	729.0	511.0	93.6	1 219.4
Other	14.2	24.4	110.1	0.4	39.0
Subtotal	**8 710.3**	**5 020.8**	**5 280.4**	**1 049.8**	**14 780.9**
Total	**16 042.7**	**6 662.3**	**6 520.7[d]**	**1 293.3**	**23 998.3[c]**

[a] Expenditure on a budget basis.

[b] Actual expenditures to 30 June 2016 as at 25 July 2016.

[c] Cumulative expenditure does not include expenditures of $4.2 million under extrabudgetary funds incurred by regional commissions and offices away from Headquarters.

[d] Represents the prorated approved appropriation for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2016, the approved allotment for the peacekeeping period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 and the prorated estimated amount for the peacekeeping period from 1 July to 30 December 2017.

III. International Public Sector Accounting Standards and the United Nations system

71. Twenty-four organizations of the United Nations system completed their IPSAS implementations successfully by 2015 and continue to receive unqualified audit opinions. These results attest to the capability of the United Nations system to both adopt IPSAS and sustain compliance with IPSAS in order to improve the quality of financial reporting, enhancing transparency and accountability.

72. With all organizations now in the post-implementation period, the key activities of the United Nations system Task Force on Accounting Standards are geared towards sustaining IPSAS compliance and the realization of the planned benefits of IPSAS implementation. This is achieved by focusing on enhancing the comparability of the organizations' policies and approaches to financial reporting, which is one of the main planned dividends of IPSAS implementation. Some of these post-implementation activities come with challenges.

73. One of the key contributing factors in respect of sustaining IPSAS compliance is the ongoing engagement by the Task Force with the IPSAS Board. The Board continues to update standards and issue guidance in response to user needs and changing environments, seeking public comments before a standard is finalized. Monitoring the work of the IPSAS Board and providing feedback on its documents on behalf of the Task Force is one of the key activities of the system-wide IPSAS project team. The team, guided by the Task Force, participated in quarterly meetings of the Board and kept Task Force members updated on new pronouncements and upcoming projects in order to assess the risks for the United Nations system. The Board's current and future projects with potential significant impact to the United Nations are those on leases, heritage assets, financial instruments, exchange and non-exchange revenue and non-exchange expenses.

74. In December 2014, the Finance and Budget Network endorsed the revised terms of reference and the proposed budget of the United Nations system-wide IPSAS project for 2016-2017. Under the revised terms of reference, the activities of the project team, which was further reduced to one P-5, were regrouped into two

main categories: (a) technical; and (b) facilitation and communication, to prioritize the objectives and reflect the reduced scope of work.

75. The system-wide IPSAS project resource continues to support the Task Force by (a) actively monitoring the activities of the IPSAS Board and briefing the Task Force on the changes and potential challenges stemming from the IPSAS Board's pronouncements and ongoing projects, coordinating IPSAS-compliant financial reporting diversity and providing guidance and support in areas of special interest identified by the Task Force; and (b) facilitating Task Force meetings and supporting activities of the thematic working focus groups and communication with high-level committees and external auditors.

76. Some of the tasks carried out by the project team in 2015 included a review of terminology used in IPSAS-compliant financial statements of the United Nations system organizations with the goal of increasing their comparability and a detailed review of the IPSAS Board's recently issued conceptual framework, which has the potential to impact new and existing IPSAS standards.

77. In 2015, the Task Force commissioned thematic working focus groups led by members of the Task Force to: (a) develop tools for the analysis of useful economic lives and impairment of property, plant and equipment; (b) review requirements of the newly issued IPSAS standards 34 to 38 on accounting for interest in other entities; and (c) address financial reporting issues in the areas of common premises and inter-agency balances. The working focus groups achieved considerable progress and produced a number of deliverables actively used by the Task Force community, such as property, plant and equipment analysis tools and an e-platform for United Nations agency partners. Some of these thematic groups continued their activities in 2016. In addition, the Task Force added new topics to the 2016 workplan, which include a review of system-wide approved useful economic lives of property, plant and equipment, harmonization of after-service health insurance accounting and valuation methodologies across the United Nations system and streamlining accounting for accrued liabilities attributable to the jointly financed activities.

IV. Streamlining the IPSAS processes

78. As at the end of 2014, the United Nations had presented IPSAS-compliant financial statements of all 13 financial reporting entities. The 2015 financial statements for the peacekeeping operations received an unqualified audit opinion; the audits of the 2015 non-peacekeeping financial statements are still in progress, but the indications are that the audit opinions will be unqualified. Further, the Organization is now on track to produce the third set of IPSAS-compliant financial statements for peacekeeping operations for the year ended 30 June 2016. This speaks to the success of the IPSAS sustainability activities currently being driven by the IPSAS team. The IPSAS team as a separate organizational unit will be decommissioned on 31 December 2017. However, as pointed out in the seventh progress report of the Secretary-General (A/69/367), it has been recognized that, beyond the post-implementation phase of the IPSAS project, there will remain a need to maintain a supporting structure within the Organization that will lead the long-term sustainability of IPSAS compliance. To that end, a review has been undertaken to identify the residual functions of the IPSAS team that should be

institutionalized to support continued IPSAS compliance, including the streamlining of IPSAS-compliant processes into the day-to-day operations of the Organization.

79. As a result of this review, it is proposed that a supporting structure to drive continued IPSAS compliance be established in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. This proposed compliance and assurance structure, which will support the global United Nations Secretariat, would consist of the following units:

(a) Accounting Policy Unit:

(i) The Accounting Policy unit will lead the engagement with the IPSAS Board, monitoring the development and changes to IPSAS, including actively providing input to influence the outcome as a risk management approach to changes emanating from new and revised standards;

(ii) The unit will maintain the IPSAS policy framework, in coordination with the finance communities in the offices away from Headquarters by updating policies and the corporate guidance and initiating changes to the United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules in keeping with changes to IPSAS;

(iii) The unit will maintain the Finance Manual, which blends IPSAS policies and Umoja processes, providing a reference point and training tool for the recording of IPSAS-complaint transactions in Umoja;

(iv) The unit will support training and knowledge-building in the area of IPSAS-compliant accounting and financial management and will support the professionalization programme to upgrade the skills of the finance community;

(b) Umoja Coordination Unit:

(i) The Umoja Coordination Unit will be responsible for the maintenance of the chart of accounts in Umoja and will vet all requests for changes/updates to the Umoja coding block that impact financial accounting and reporting;

(ii) The unit will also be responsible for the functional administration tasks relating the Business Planning and Consolidation automation platform and for the accurate running of the Umoja batches that impact financial accounting and reporting, including the investigation and correction of irregular entries produced by the automated batches. From a functional perspective, this unit will support issues related to interfaces, future Umoja deployments and software upgrades;

(iii) The unit will support the preparation of functional specifications for any changes to the Umoja Enterprise Central Component, Business Intelligence and Business Planning and Consolidation that impact IPSAS-compliant financial accounting and reporting. It will conduct diagnostics to ensure that the Umoja modules, ledgers and sub-ledgers are kept in sync to support financial accounting and reporting. The unit will support the building of dashboards and reports and the provision of analytical data for financial analysis;

(c) Asset Accounting Unit:

(i) The Asset Accounting Unit will work directly with asset management officers to ensure accurate IPSAS-compliant accounting and reporting of

property, plant and equipment, intangible assets and inventory, including assets under construction, via Umoja across the Organization; the unit will support asset accounting for both peacekeeping and non-peacekeeping operations;

(ii) The unit will work directly with asset management officers to strengthen operational processes that support IPSAS-compliant asset accounting, working with property managers to conduct ongoing reviews of the useful lives of assets, recognition thresholds, standard costs and other operational policies that impact IPSAS-compliance;

(iii) The unit will support training and knowledge-building in the area of IPSAS-compliant assets accounting in Umoja;

(d) Assurance and Monitoring Unit:

(i) The Assurance and Monitoring Unit will be responsible for ensuring reasonable assurance over the reliability of data that flow into the financial statements of the reporting entities of the Secretariat and the data in Umoja that are used for financial analysis and decision-making;

(ii) The unit will participate in activities that strengthen internal controls over financial accounting and reporting and controls over operational activities that impact financial reporting; the unit will monitor transactions in Umoja, looking for indicators of errors and irregularities, and will initiate the corrective actions. The unit will support the management of the framework that will support the Statement on Internal Controls;

(iii) The unit will support the management of the Umoja role assignment and user access, taking segregation of duties and delegation of authority into consideration, and support the setup and strengthening of appropriate workflows in the system.

80. The proposed units would be staffed largely from currently approved resources: the established regular budget posts currently assigned to the IPSAS project (three posts) and four posts deployed from existing resources of the Financial Reporting Service of the Accounts Division. Further, a request will be made for three positions (two P-4s and one P-3) under the support account for peacekeeping operations in the 2017-2018 period. These four proposed units would secure the long-term sustainability of IPSAS compliance across the global United Nations Secretariat and would support the use of IPSAS-triggered information to better manage the Organization.

V. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

81. The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report, including the plan to support continued IPSAS compliance, as well as the streamlining of IPSAS-compliant processes into the day-to-day operations of the Organization.

United Nations A/71/227

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 53 of the provisional agenda*

Questions relating to information

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/93 B, provides highlights of recent communications and outreach activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, with a particular focus on areas of reference and interest reflected in the resolution and in the deliberations of the Committee on Information at its thirty-eighth session.

* A/71/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 101 of its resolution 70/93 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirty-eighth session and to the Assembly at its seventy-first session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of all recommendations and requests contained in that resolution. Accordingly, the Department submitted three reports for consideration by the Committee at its thirty-eighth session, held from 26 April to 6 May 2016 (A/AC.198/2016/2, A/AC.198/2016/3 and A/AC.198/2016/4). The deliberations of the Committee with regard to those reports are reflected in the report of the Committee on its thirty-eighth session (A/71/21).

2. The present report contains updates to the information provided to the Committee on Information at its thirty-eighth session, including a summary of activities undertaken by the Department from March to September 2016 through its three subprogrammes: strategic communications services, news services and outreach and knowledge services.

II. Strategic communications services, including United Nations information centres

A. Human rights

3. To publicize the International Decade for People of African Descent, the Department partnered with the African Diaspora International Film Festival for a Black History Month event at Columbia University in New York on 26 February and co-sponsored a panel discussion on women of African descent on 29 April in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and Black Women's Blueprint, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in New York working to empower women and girls of African descent. Booklets on the Decade were produced and distributed in the six official languages.

4. For the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda (7 April), the Department, with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations, organized a memorial ceremony at United Nations Headquarters. United Nations information centres in Dhaka, Brussels, Brazzaville, Accra, New Delhi, Tehran, Nairobi, Antananarivo, Windhoek, Lagos, Nigeria, Dakar, Pretoria, Geneva, Port of Spain, Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, and Lusaka, among others, also organized events. A screening of the documentary *Intore*, which depicts how the younger generations in Rwanda use music and dance to deal with the challenges posed by their country's past, was held on 28 June at United Nations Headquarters in New York. A screening of a second film about Rwanda is planned for later in 2016.

5. For the fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (9-20 May), the Department produced a series of fact sheets in English, French, Russian and Spanish, organized press conferences and provided wide news coverage of the session in at least eight languages. The Department also chaired a

communications working group for the implementation of the system-wide action plan for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and produced a booklet with the action plan in the six official languages.

6. For Nelson Mandela International Day (18 July), the Department worked with UN-Women to organize volunteer activities for United Nations staff in New York in which they donated clothing and delivered meals to people in need and helped out in a shelter for domestic violence victims. Elsewhere, 18 United Nations information centres around the world held events marking the International Day, including exhibits, student discussions and the planting of memorial trees.

7. The Department engaged in a series of multilingual promotional activities to observe the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March), the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19 June), the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August) and the International Day of Democracy (15 September).

B. Peace and security

8. The Department, working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, marked the 2016 International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers (29 May) on the theme "Honouring our heroes". Events at United Nations Headquarters included a ceremony for the inaugural Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage. The commemoration also allowed United Nations information centres to engage with Member States through a range of events including parades, exhibitions, book fairs, seminars, outreach to schools, multimedia programmes and translation of the Secretary-General's message into local languages for distribution to the media.

9. The Department worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to disseminate the 2016 policy on strategic communications and public information for peacekeeping operations to mission staff worldwide. It also worked with the two Departments and other United Nations entities to produce a communications strategy on combating sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel.

10. The Department continued to co-manage the United Nations peacekeeping website with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, ensuring that information on the activities of the missions is updated in the six official languages, and rolled out a new web platform for individual field mission websites.

11. In addition, the Department supported efforts for the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, preparing a communications strategy, creating messaging documents for the media and developing the Mission's website in English and Spanish. The United Nations information centre in Bogotá assisted locally with media monitoring and translations.

12. The Department also provided support to United Nations efforts to combat cholera in Haiti by producing a communications plan and working with United Nations system partners in Haiti to better highlight the Organization's work in this regard. It also facilitated training for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to support the development of a new website and help to build national staff capacity.

13. A staff member of the Department was sent to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, based in Geneva, to provide communications support from April to June, and communications support was also provided to the United Nations Zika response, with the Department working in close partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) to deliver messaging across platforms and through the global network of United Nations information centres. The launch of the Secretary-General's Zika Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund was also supported.

14. The Department continued to support the work of the Special Adviser on the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, including by leading communications efforts for the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants" (A/70/59) and on the broader issues related to refugees and migrants, and launched a website in all six official languages.

15. Communications support was also provided to the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat to mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests (29 August), including updating the website in all six official languages and writing and disseminating press releases.

16. In the area of counter-terrorism, and in coordination with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Department continued to support efforts to raise awareness about the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and designed a new web platform, United Nations Action to Counter Terrorism. The platform, available in all six official languages, serves as an online hub linking the key United Nations entities working on counter-terrorism.

17. The Department also provided communications support to the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, promoting high-level meetings, including briefings to the Security Council, and facilitating interviews with the media.

C. Promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals

18. To mark the first anniversary of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Department supported a week of events during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly featuring the Goals' branding, the launch of partnership initiatives on the Goals and the participation of many of the Sustainable Development Goals Advocates.

19. The Department continued to highlight the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals through its communication campaign, Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform Our World. Under that umbrella campaign, the Department developed two initiatives, Why the Sustainable Development Goals Matter to Me and The Year of Living Sustainably, which underscore the importance of the Goals and recommend actions to help to achieve them. Through the United Nations website and on social media platforms, the Department continues to promote the Goals at major United Nations events.

20. The Department worked in close collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme for World Environment Day (5 June), disseminating campaign materials globally through the United Nations information centres and

helping to promote the United Nations Green Fair held in early June at United Nations Headquarters and the headquarters of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). For World Oceans Day (8 June), the Department compiled a communications kit on the theme "Healthy oceans, healthy planet". The Department also worked closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to produce communications material for the 2016 high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS (8-10 June) and the ninth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (14-16 June).

21. United Nations information centres have translated the icons, fact sheet, logo and poster of the Sustainable Development Goals into 45 local languages, and Member States and other institutions have translated the icons into an additional three languages.[1] A number of information centres have also been involved in various initiatives and partnerships related to the promotion of the Goals, including through sports, exhibitions, workshops and media outreach. The information centre in Beirut publishes articles fortnightly in Arabic on the 17 Goals in partnership with the *Lebanon Debate* news website, as well as in *Ad-Diyar*.

22. The United Nations information centre in Mexico City partnered with ISA Corporativo, a leading advertising transport company (metros, airports and bus stations) in Mexico, and produced multimedia materials such as videos, animated GIFs and infographics, to be displayed on subway screens as well as at the international airport in Mexico City.

23. Directly related to the Goals' implementation, the Department played a key role in communication planning, message development and media and constituency outreach for the high-level political forum on sustainable development (11-20 July). The inaugural *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* was also launched during the high-level political forum. The Department issued press materials in the six official languages and coordinated media outreach to promote the report.

D. Climate change

24. To prepare the United Nations information centres for the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change on 22 April, the Department organized WebEx sessions in advance for staff at the centres and more than 40 electronic and print media outlets. A number of information centres subsequently organized activities to coincide with the signing ceremony, including exhibitions, media briefings, seminars and multimedia productions. The information centre in Nairobi held a photo opportunity on Mount Kenya to raise awareness both of the rapidly diminishing glaciers and of international efforts under way to halt the impact of climate change across Africa.

[1] Afrikaans, Amharic, Armenian, Bahasa Indonesia, Bafut, Bangla/Bengali, Bangnwa, Basaa, Catalan, Czech, Dioula, Dutch, Ewondo, Fulfulde, German, Georgian, Greek, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Igbo, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Moore, Ndebele, Persian, Pidgin English, Polish, Portuguese, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Shona, Sinhala, Siswati, Shupamum, Tamil, Telugu, TshiVenda, Twi, Turkish, Wolof, Xitsonga and Yoruba.

E. World Humanitarian Summit

25. United Nations information centres widely publicized the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May, through media and public outreach. Several centres translated and placed the Secretary-General's op-ed, "An agenda for humanity", in outlets in 11 countries. In addition, information centres organized interviews and the placement of the Emergency Relief Coordinator's op-ed, "What we need from the Humanitarian Summit", in newspapers and websites in 26 countries.

F. Conference on the least developed countries

26. The United Nations information centre in Ankara provided public information and media support for the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, held in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May, including by having the centre's National Information Officer serve as conference spokesperson.

G. Special information programme on the question of Palestine

27. In the context of its mandated special information programme on the question of Palestine, the Department organized, in close cooperation with the Government of South Africa and with support from the Government of Sweden, its annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East (Pretoria, 31 August-2 September). It also continued to support the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, including holding a screening in April of the award-winning film *Giraffada*.

H. Decolonization

28. In the area of decolonization and pursuant to paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 70/103, the Department finalized the latest update of the leaflet entitled, "What the United Nations can do to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories". The leaflet has been produced in English and will be translated later in 2016 into the other official languages. It also continued to update and maintain the dedicated website, The United Nations and Decolonization, in the six official languages.

I. New Partnership for Africa's Development

29. The Department continues to raise global awareness of and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development through its magazine, *Africa Renewal/ Afrique Renouveau*, and website, in both English and French. Between March and May 2016, the Department successfully placed 18 news features from the magazine, in English and French, in 89 media outlets from 19 countries.

30. Working in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) and the African Union Commission, the Department provided media support to a high-level side event on the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women, which was organized in March on the margins of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

31. In April, the Department participated in the 2016 annual conference of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, held in Addis Ababa, on implementing the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Mechanism's Advocacy and Communications Cluster, of which the Department is a member, adopted a communication plan of action to be implemented in 2016-2017.

32. During the New York launch in April of the *Economic Report on Africa 2016*, the Department provided media support to the Economic Commission for Africa by producing information products and organizing interviews for senior officials. The report's key findings and recommendations were featured in the August issue of *Africa Renewal*.

J. Strengthening United Nations information centres

33. The Department has increasingly used WebEx for interaction with its network of more than 60 United Nations information centres on programmatic, administrative and financial issues. In 2015, more than 110 live briefings were held to provide substantive guidance on key United Nations priorities to staff and members of the media and civil society in the field.

34. Increased support from Headquarters to information centres, along with a more coordinated approach that places the larger centres in a more supporting role in their respective regions, was optimized in the context of resource constraints.

K. Supporting United Nations country teams

35. United Nations information centres work in close cooperation with United Nations entities in the field, communicating with one voice on joint projects and campaigns. Many information centres lead or actively participate in the formulation of country-specific communications strategies through the local United Nations communication groups.

36. United Nations information centres have taken a lead role with United Nations country teams to make the Sustainable Development Goals more widely known and relevant to local communities. This collaboration is already reflected in the strategic communication plans of many country teams.

37. Information centres also work closely with country teams within the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework through the development of communications strategies, media support, organization of briefings and video production.

L. Multilingualism

38. The United Nations information centres published information materials such as booklets, brochures, pamphlets, posters, press kits, bookmarks and calendars in 63 local languages and, on a regular basis, prepare or reissue and translate press releases, fact sheets and other information materials.

39. Out of 61 information centre websites, 30 use local languages. In addition, information centres are increasingly using social media tools to disseminate information, including in local languages: as many as 49 have Facebook accounts, including 15 in local languages, 40 have Twitter accounts in 23 local languages, and 29 have YouTube accounts in 8 local languages. Information centres also utilized other social media platforms, including Google+, Vimeo, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, Pinterest, Flipboard, LinkedIn, Telegram, SMS and VKontakte. Information centres also produced newsletters in 15 local languages.

M. Social media

40. The Department continues to use social media platforms to share comprehensive, balanced and objective updates in all official languages about the issues before the Organization. In June, the Department welcomed its 2 millionth fan on Facebook. In the past year, more than 300,000 people have signed up for photo updates on Instagram. In addition to providing day-to-day updates about the work of the United Nations around the world, special priority has been placed on the roll-out of the Sustainable Development Goals and the situation of refugees and migrants in the lead-up to the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants on 19 September. The Department also deployed a multilingual team to Turkey to cover the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul and the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Antalya.

III. News services

A. Social media

41. The Department has made it a priority to create new digital products that target social media platforms in multiple languages and that are accessible on mobile devices. Taking into account the very different levels of access around the world, the Department is tailoring products to make content available with due regard to both viewer habits and connectivity constraints. Social media videos are being created on an almost daily basis in connection with the news cycle and special events. The United Nations Channel on YouTube (www.youtube.com/unitednations) exceeded 24 million views, a 40 per cent increase from the past year, and the number of individual subscribers has grown to more than 105,000.

42. The Department worked closely with the communications team in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to prepare multilingual content in advance of the World Humanitarian Summit. A video primer was created using infographics for easy mobile viewing in all six official languages. In addition, several social media videos were created during the Summit and garnered well over

1 million views; the videos made for Chinese audiences and shared on multiple platforms garnered approximately 2.5 million views. Similar efforts were made with the signing ceremony for the Paris Agreement on climate change in April, which saw a surge in social media activity across languages.

43. Social media reach improved at a steady rate in all languages during the reporting period. For example, the Arabic Facebook account experienced a 4 per cent monthly increase, bringing its reach to 350,000 followers. The United Nations Arabic Twitter account has seen rapid growth in the region, stemming from efforts made to work closely with United Nations system partners with a strong presence in the Arab world.

44. The United Nations Chinese Weibo account continues to grow and is expected to reach 7.9 million followers by September. On the three Chinese social video-sharing applications (Weishi, Miaopai and Meipai), United Nations videos have been viewed 700 million times.

45. The United Nations French Twitter account reached 93,800 followers in June and at present is heading past the 100,000 mark. The United Nations Russian Facebook account is expected to reach 30,000 users by September, which constitutes an annual increase of more than 100 per cent. The number of views on the Russian YouTube platform showed steady growth of close to 10 per cent per month during the reporting period.

46. Social media in Spanish continued a strong upward trend, with the Twitter account experiencing a 7.4 per cent increase in followers between March and mid-June. In addition, the YouTube account reflected a 25.6 per cent growth rate in the same period.

47. During the reporting period, those accounts were constantly updated and curated, ensuring that the top United Nations news stories of the day were shared globally, as was information pertaining to current public information campaigns and other events. The Department sent out social media guidance on available multilingual materials on a weekly basis and held weekly coordination meetings in an attempt to increase language parity.

B. Television and the Internet

48. Recognizing the changing media landscape, the Department reviewed how to optimize content for digital platforms and the need to draw on digital tools for production and dissemination on the Internet. This led to important new ideas about the shifts in production and promotion, and the use of digital platforms.

49. For the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, a dedicated website was updated to ensure up-to-the-minute posting of delegates' statements, including documents, audio and videos. In addition, a new website was launched for the President of the General Assembly.

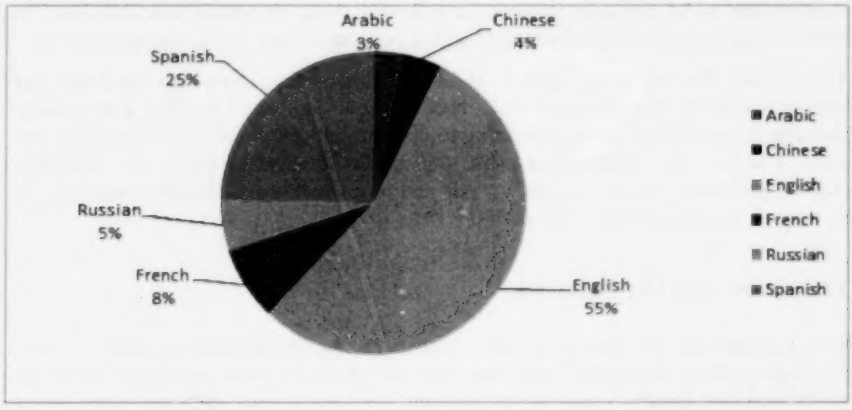
50. With regard to ongoing support for the promotion of United Nations observances on the web, in March, the website for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade was restructured and enhanced to reflect the year-round work of the Remember Slavery programme. In May, a new website was launched for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (17 May).

51. In July, redesigned websites for the Secretary-General and for his Spokesperson were launched and currently conform to the new United Nations web branding, offering a more dynamic multimedia experience. A multilingual website for journalists was launched in June and provides complete information on media accreditation, as well as information concerning specific conferences, links to documents, video coverage, observances and alerts for the press.

United Nations website page views by languages, 1 March-31 May 2016

Language	*New sessions (percentage)*	*Number of sessions*	*Number of users*	*Page views*	*Pages per session*
Arabic	66.99	547 635	392 639	1 274 563	2.33
Chinese	75.25	701 987	549 307	1 860 234	2.65
English	58.64	9 905 668	6 306 030	23 768 252	2.4
French	63.75	1 495 245	1 028 494	3 451 677	2.31
Russian	59.45	1 043 860	667 028	2 281 876	2.19
Spanish	70.50	5 746 543	4 293 391	10 757 962	1.87
Total/average	**70.50**	**19 440 938**	**13 236 889**	**43 394 564**	**2.29**

Figure I
United Nations website page views by language, 1 March-31 May 2016



52. The United Nations Television Section has continued producing video products highlighting major United Nations themes and issues. The monthly flagship programme, *21st Century*, established a production partnership with Channels TV Nigeria, which reaches 25 million households, to add to its existing broadcast partnerships in Arabic, Chinese, English and French. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and renowned singer-songwriter Angelique Kidjo became host of *21ème Siècle*, the French version of the programme, attracting media interest and, potentially, increased audiences across the francophone world. Special editions of the show have been produced throughout 2016, showcasing key issues, such as humanitarian action and migration and refugees.

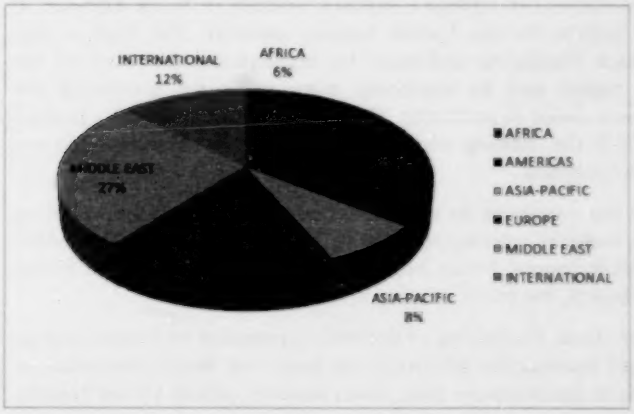
53. As part of an effort to meet the demand for short videos geared towards commemorations and observances, the Section produced several *UN in Action* videos in the six official languages, including for: the International Day for Biodiversity; World Environment Day; World Oceans Day; and the International Day of Forests. The Section also produced two short videos on the Paris Agreement on climate change. One video, *Turn Aspiration into Action*, was created for the signing ceremony and was released on social media in the six official languages and in Portuguese. A second video focusing on the Secretary-General's climate leadership was released on social media in the six official languages.

54. The Department's webcast services continuously seek ways to improve and expand the Organization's live and on-demand webcast services to directly reach a global audience. During the reporting period, United Nations Web TV (webtv.un.org) generated about 12 million video views. For the high-level signature ceremony for the Paris Agreement on 22 April, some 313,587 users from more than 215 countries and territories viewed the event live and on demand.

55. In addition to the live and on-demand webcast coverage of meetings and events held at United Nations Headquarters, the Department provides webcast coverage of the meetings of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva and of other major United Nations conferences, including the seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (Baku), the World Humanitarian Summit, the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Nairobi) and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) (Quito).

56. UNifeed continues to service broadcasters that need images related to the work of the United Nations or its agencies both at Headquarters and in the field. Clients can access the raw footage packaged as stories, which include sound bites in various languages, either by downloading the material from the UNifeed website or through major news organizations that have been long-time partners, such as the Associated Press, Reuters TV and Eurovision. During the reporting period, UNifeed made available to broadcasters more than 1,000 stories through its website, reaching at least 500 broadcast users per month.

Figure II
UNifeed clients by region, 1 March-31 May 2016



57. During the first four months of the reporting period, the most popular stories were related to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, including stories on the Geneva talks, humanitarian aid delivery and the refugee situation. Other popular stories related to the earthquake in Ecuador in April 2016, the outbreak of the Zika virus and a WHO report on diabetes. A wide range of other issues were covered during the reporting period, including the situation in South Sudan, allegations of sexual abuse by United Nations peacekeepers in the Central African Republic and the process of selection of the Secretary-General.

58. UNifeed, in addition to being a tool for external broadcasters, also provides an additional resource for the Department's news teams, which use the raw footage to illustrate their stories.

C. Radio and online news

59. Online news-gathering teams increasingly work across different media to capture and incorporate audio, video and text into news that is presented to multiple audiences, including to partner organizations. This strategy was demonstrated to great success at the World Humanitarian Summit, where a team of four news producers worked closely with a television producer and social media staff to produce audio, video and text content in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish while also sending raw content in Chinese, Kiswahili and Portuguese back to Headquarters for use in Radio and News Centre stories.

60. The language units of United Nations Radio and the United Nations News Centre have also embarked on cross-promoting content such as interviews and podcasts. The teams are working together to provide a new integrated multimedia news site in all the official languages, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese.

61. United Nations Radio language units are diversifying their partnership base by using the SoundCloud online audio distribution platform and blogs to reach radio stations with their content and tailoring that content to evolving audience needs. The units are providing news in smaller segments, from 5 to 15 minutes, for use by news organizations around the world, to account for the challenges of time zones and user habits.

62. The English Unit of United Nations Radio has embarked on a major outreach effort, contacting radio stations on college campuses, initially in North America, to encourage university stations to use United Nations material. The Unit is also making a push to reach Caribbean audiences by highlighting the work of the Organization in the region and by exploring story ideas for promoting the Sustainable Development Goals in particular. The Unit has also launched a podcast series entitled *The Lid Is On*, starting with shows on refugees, migration and sex trafficking, among other subjects.

63. The Arabic Unit has continued to expand its multimedia work by producing video, audio and text material catering to all categories of audiences. One video about the visit of UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie to Lebanon to meet Syrian refugees, produced in March, has received more than 209,000 views.

64. For the Portuguese Unit, the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change in April, the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS in June, the World Humanitarian Summit in May and World Environment Day, which featured official United Nations

events in Luanda, were some of the key topics covered during the reporting period. Most recently, the Unit formalized cooperation with Globo International, ensuring that United Nations stories were covered by the largest television channel in Brazil, which also serves 1.2 million subscribers in the United States of America.

65. The Kiswahili Unit formed three new radio partnerships with stations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Unit started live-streaming on Facebook, increasing its followers on that platform from 15,000 at the start of 2016 to more than 76,000.

66. The Spanish Unit established a strong partnership with the United Nations information centre in Buenos Aires, which resulted in the sharing of the Unit's audio products on a regular basis, thereby reaching many more listeners in that country. The Unit has also established a relationship with the regional office of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will fund coverage for two upcoming meetings in Panama City and Asunción.

67. The French Unit initiated the production of a new 10-minute daily news programme, together with plans for a second update later each day. The new initiative has been well received by radio partners. The Unit also launched a new outreach exercise resulting in three new partnerships with radio stations, reaching a potential audience of more than 9 million new listeners.

68. The Chinese Unit has also established new partnerships with radio stations and is redoubling its multimedia and social media quotient. Live-linking with China National Radio has become standard around major events or moments related to the United Nations.

69. New online products across languages have also been gaining traction, such as "From our archives" and "In case you missed it". Some noteworthy recent feature items include an interview with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and the Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syrian Arab Republic and a feature story on the successful United Nations-backed parliamentary elections in the Central African Republic.

D. Press and photography coverage

70. During the reporting period, the Meetings Coverage Section produced 2,301 press releases in English and French. About 25 per cent of that output (569 press releases) consisted of summaries of the meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as of their subsidiary bodies and substantive commissions. In addition, 1,451 press releases included statements, remarks and messages from the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General and material from other United Nations offices and departments.

71. The various social media platforms overseen by the Photo Library continued to grow during the reporting period. Facebook has more than 91,000 likes with a monthly reach of 40,000 and Twitter has grown to more than 73,000 followers with an average of 1 million impressions per month. The Flickr account currently has at least 26 million accumulated views.

72. The Photo Library handled over 5,000 requests from Member States, the media, publishers and the general public during the reporting period. The number of high-resolution photographs distributed to clients through the Library or the photo website rose from 78,000 to 120,000 during the same period.

73. Thanks to a donation of $4.5 million from the Government of Oman, the Department of Public Information began a large-scale project to digitize most of the United Nations audiovisual collection in March. During the first phase of the project, the Audiovisual Library hired experts to catalogue and enter metadata for each asset.

74. Between March and July 2016, the Media Liaison and Accreditation Unit processed over 3,000 accreditation requests for events held at United Nations Headquarters in New York (including the high-level thematic debate on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the thirtieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem and the high-level signature ceremony for the Paris Agreement) and over 1,300 accreditations for the World Humanitarian Summit and the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, both held in Turkey. The Unit expects that by September it will have processed an additional 2,000 to 3,000 requests for the general debate and other high-level meetings of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

75. From March to July, the Unit provided information and logistical assistance for approximately 250 stake-outs and press briefings and facilitated the media coverage of more than 50 bilateral meetings with the Secretary-General and other photo opportunities. The Unit also alerts members of the press and other key partners to United Nations activities at Headquarters and to the release of critical documents by e-mail and through its Twitter account, which at present has more than 35,000 followers.

IV. Outreach and knowledge services

A. Education outreach

76. Working in close collaboration with States members of the Caribbean Community and the African Union, the Department marked the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (25 March) on the theme "Celebrating the heritage and culture of the African diaspora and its roots".

77. The Department partnered with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library and the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations to organize the exhibit "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers", which was on view at United Nations Headquarters in February and March. Materials for the United Nations information centres were produced in Arabic, English, French and Spanish and in Hindi and Portuguese.

78. Other events organized as part of the Remember Slavery programme included a panel discussion and performance on the transatlantic slave trade entitled "Constructing new Amistad, Bunce Island, Gullah, Maroon and Nova Scotia bridges" at United Nations Headquarters in March, organized by the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations and co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations and the Sierra Leone Monuments and Relics Commission; a cultural and culinary event also held at United Nations

Headquarters in March to celebrate the heritage and traditions that enslaved Africans brought to Europe and the Americas; activities related to the twenty-fifth anniversary in March of the African Burial Ground in New York; a briefing for NGOs in April on the musical journey of the African diaspora; and a global videoconference connecting 500 high school students at United Nations Headquarters with students in Senegal and Trinidad and Tobago in May.

79. The Department oversaw the production of models of the *Ark of Return*, the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade at United Nations Headquarters, as well as a brochure entitled "The Ark" in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Weekly tours of the memorial were provided to visitors. The Department also screened the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* at United Nations Headquarters and 17 United Nations information centres; the movie was subtitled in English, French and Spanish and in Portuguese.

80. The Department's Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, in partnership with the Centro Primo Levi New York, held a round-table discussion entitled "After the Holocaust: Primo Levi and the nexus of science, responsibility and humanism" on 4 May. The event explored themes found in Primo Levi's writings, including scientific ethics, history and memory, language and transmission, and justice and responsibility.

B. Youth and educational outreach

81. Ahead of the International Day of Peace (21 September), the Secretary-General provided a 100-day countdown message. The Department started the countdown with a new hip-hop music video on the Sustainable Development Goals, produced in all six official languages, and extensive media outreach to support the Secretary-General's message. The Department also launched a video contest calling upon young people to submit clips on how the Sustainable Development Goals could build peace.

82. A student observance was organized at United Nations Headquarters on the theme "The Sustainable Development Goals: building blocks for peace" (16 September). A website and print materials in all six official languages, as well as a strong social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, were created to complement the event.

C. United Nations Academic Impact initiative

83. The United Nations Academic Impact initiative, in association with ELS Educational Services, successfully concluded the third annual "Many languages, one world" international essay contest for college and university students. The theme for 2016 focused on the role of multilingualism in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Students were asked to write an essay on the topic in an official United Nations language that was neither their mother tongue nor their primary language of instruction. More than 9,000 participants from 2,500 universities in 164 countries took part in the contest. A total of 60 winners, 10 for each language, attended a week-long multilingual Global Youth Forum in New York, which culminated in an event in the General Assembly Hall on 29 July in which the students presented their projects on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

84. During the reporting period, the initiative also held a number of events as part of the Skills and Technology Accelerating Rapid Transformation (START) series, including a discussion on the intersection of environmental degradation and health, with an emphasis on concrete actions and policy changes that could help to safeguard public health. It also partnered with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations and Ewha Womans University to hold a symposium in New York in April on 70 years of United Nations public diplomacy and public information.

85. The initiative published a number of academic articles on its website on a range of Sustainable Development Goal-related issues, including a series on food security and climate change, the impact of the Zika virus on human rights and the increased risk of pandemics and epidemics in a globalized world. The articles helped to disseminate information about the Goals and spark discussion and information-sharing on cutting-edge research being conducted around the world to help to achieve the Goals.

D. Engagement with youth

86. During the period under review, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth convened and participated in high-level events in which the Envoy promoted youth-led, youth-serving organizations and other youth stakeholders' participation in the United Nations system and beyond.

87. The Office of the Envoy supported the organization of key youth-focused events during the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Forum, the World Humanitarian Summit, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the high-level segment of the General Assembly. Together with partners, the Office led efforts to mark World Youth Skills Day on 15 July and International Youth Day on 12 August, with events and activities both at United Nations Headquarters and in other locations through the initiative of Member States and United Nations country teams.

88. Following the launch in 2015 of the Global Youth Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals, the Office has been rolling out three core components: (a) Youth Gateway, an online platform for young people to learn about and engage in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) Young Leaders initiative, which recognizes an annual class of young change-makers around the world whose work supports the Goals and whose influence can help to mobilize young people; and (c) Global Youth Index, a mechanism for tracking youth development progress in the context of the 2030 Agenda by reviewing youth-relevant indicators in the global framework of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

E. Sales and marketing

89. The Department offers United Nations publications for sale in all official languages. During the reporting period, the United Nations iLibrary (www.un-ilibrary.org), launched in February 2016, grew to contain 2,000 titles, of which about 20 per cent are in languages other than English.

90. The iLibrary is the first comprehensive global search, discovery and viewing source for a digital collection of multilingual publications created by the United Nations. The iLibrary is freely available for viewing, sharing and embedding. The e-commerce platform https://shop.un.org was launched in all six official languages, allowing for easy discovery and purchase of United Nations publications in print and PDF format in all available languages.

91. Ten contracts were signed to license the translation of many flagship publications into Chinese, Croatian, Finnish, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Thai, all of which will be available both electronically and in print.

92. Sustainable printing policies for sales publications have been implemented, including print on demand, to ensure that paper and other resources are used sustainably and responsibly. Publications are printed using environmentally friendly processes, including water-based inks and paper that is recycled or comes from sustainably managed forests.

F. Publications and editorial

93. The online Yearbook Express, which features the chapter introductions to corresponding volumes of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, continued to expand, at present going back to the 1999 edition, in all six official languages.

94. The *UN Chronicle* volume LII, No. 4, 2015, "Implementing the 2030 Agenda: the challenge of conflict", was published in English in March and in French in April 2016. Volume LIII, No. 1, 2016, "Humanitarian action: a shared responsibility", was published in English in May and in French in June. Both issues were translated into Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish for online publication in July 2016. Volume LIII, No. 2, 2016, "Sport aims for the Goals", was published in English in August and scheduled to be published in French in September and subsequently translated into Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish for online publication.

95. In response to the Committee's encouragement to focus on paperless editions, the number of print copies has been reduced, with the exception of paid subscriptions, for 2015-2016.

G. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

96. Services to the Library's stakeholders and clients continue to gain momentum. The online knowledge base, Ask Dag, has grown to about 35,000 views per month. More than 2,000 information research requests from permanent missions were also answered and training provided to approximately 160 delegates.

97. Activities to make information accessible to a multilingual audience continued. Since March, the Library has published 11 new research guides, including on the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations and NGOs and the World Humanitarian Summit in English; peacekeeping documentation in French; introduction to United Nations documentation in Russian; and information resources on Latin America and the Caribbean in Spanish.

98. Some 11,270 United Nations documents were digitized and uploaded to the Official Document System. Digitization of official records of the Economic and Social Council, documents of the General Assembly and meeting records of the Conference on Disarmament was completed.

99. The Charter of the United Nations (in 45 language versions), the complete set of the *Statistical Yearbook*, the collection of documents on the United Nations Conference on International Organizations ("San Francisco Conference"), the *United Nations Blue Books* series, the complete set of the statements on the collection of contributions, the reports of the UNICEF Executive Board and the set of Secretary-General's bulletins were all digitized and added to the digital repository.

II. Non-governmental organizations: relations and advocacy

100. There are currently 1,466 NGOs associated with the Department. In 2016, the Department organized the sixty-sixth Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for NGOs in partnership with the Executive Committee of NGOs Associated with the Department of Public Information, the National Organizing Committee for the Conference and the Republic of Korea. The Conference was held from 30 May to 1 June in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea.

101. The Conference, on the theme "Education for global citizenship: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals together", featured more than 1,300 youth delegates, an unprecedented number. A highlight was the adoption of the Gyeongju Action Plan, in which Member States were urged to prioritize education in policy and practice, adopt an International Day of Education and create a new post of Envoy of the Secretary-General to Civil Society.

102. The Department continues to bring awareness to the issues and work of the United Nations through creative partnerships with the media, non-profit organizations and the entertainment industry. In March, the Department facilitated the filming of scenes at United Nations Headquarters for an episode of the television series *Madam Secretary*, which featured the fictional Secretary of State of the United States addressing the General Assembly on terrorism. The episode was seen by close to 10 million viewers in the United States alone, with many more estimated to watch in other countries.

103. On the occasion of the International Day of Happiness (20 March), the Department collaborated with the Columbia TriStar Marketing Group to raise awareness of the need for action on climate change. A social media campaign that featured the animated characters of the newly released *The Angry Birds Movie* reached 749 million impressions on Twitter and was covered by approximately 140 television news broadcasters globally.

104. The Department continued to leverage the strong traditional media interest and the large social media reach of the United Nations Messengers of Peace and other celebrity advocates. On 22 April, Messenger of Peace Leonardo DiCaprio addressed the opening of the high-level signature ceremony for the Paris Agreement, which he actively promoted on social media. Messengers of Peace Princess Haya and Michael Douglas lent their voices to promote the World Humanitarian Summit by appearing in a public service announcement produced by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Messenger of Peace Daniel Barenboim led the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in a performance at the Summit on 23 May. Messenger of Peace Lang Lang recorded a video in support of the UNHCR "#WithRefugees" campaign in the lead-up to the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants in September.

105. The Department provided support to Member States and partners in organizing a range of special events to promote the goals of the Organization. These included a performance by the students of the Juilliard School at the high-level signing ceremony for the Paris Agreement in April; and the screening in July of *Where the Roads End*, which examines yaws, a tropical infectious disease, followed by a discussion.

I. Visitors' services

106. The annual Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists Fellowship Programme was open to junior and mid-level journalists from developing countries. A total of 15 journalists from Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Guatemala, Guyana, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Oman, Papua New Guinea, the Sudan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were to participate in the Programme, starting on 8 September.

107. During the reporting period, the Speakers Bureau arranged for groups to be briefed by United Nations officials on a wide range of topics. In-house briefings reached more than 20,000 people, primarily students. Groups were briefed in all six official languages, as well as in Bahasa Indonesia, German, Italian, Japanese and Korean, at United Nations Headquarters, through Skype, and at other locations.

108. The United Nations Works for You outreach activity enabled United Nations officials to travel to elementary, middle and high schools to educate some 1,600 young people in Chile and the United States about the work of the Organization.

109. Guided tours, which are one-hour lecture tours about the work of the Organization, continued to be offered. Approximately 160,000 visitors took tours during the reporting period, conducted in the six official languages, as well as in German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean and Portuguese.

J. United Nations intranet (iSeek) and deleGATE

110. More than 350 stories in English and French and more than 550 global and local announcements on key management issues and United Nations events and initiatives were posted on the United Nations intranet, iSeek, and deleGATE.

111. iSeek, geared to United Nations staff at its eight major duty stations and those in the field, underwent a thorough redesign of its architecture to improve access to information. Additional entities (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) and local intranets (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) were also integrated into iSeek.

K. Graphic Design Unit

112. The Graphic Design Unit continued to offer support to Secretariat departments and United Nations information centres in providing visual communication and graphic design solutions for global and internal public information campaigns, observances, conferences and publications. The Unit bolstered the Organization's multilingualism efforts and increased its ability to adapt designs in the official languages, which previously needed to be outsourced to other departments. The Unit also provided electronic designs and templates to information centres, reducing costs as well as the environmental impact of shipments overseas.

V. Deepening a culture of evaluation

113. The Department strengthened its commitment to evaluation by approving a new evaluation policy that aimed to align the evaluation work of the Department with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. Based on the new policy, as well as the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the Department is currently undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of gender equality and the empowerment of women in its work. The findings of that evaluation will help the Department to strengthen its work to promote gender equality and improve its capacity to monitor and assess that work, in line with its new strategy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The evaluation is being conducted by the Evaluation and Communications Research Unit, which undertakes evaluations of the Department's work and programmes and ensures accurate monitoring and analysis of the Department's traditional and social media work.

114. New, more comprehensive social media analysis tools procured by the Unit have allowed the Department to analyse its social media activity in greater depth, learning valuable lessons on what is effective on social media. For example, the Department monitored 4.7 million mentions of the campaign hashtag #COP21 on social media, which brought in more than 800,000 new followers to the main United Nations Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts. Assessments of the social media work on climate change also illustrated how celebrity advocates strengthened outreach to global audiences, especially young people.

115. The Department undertook a through and systematic re-examination of its expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement in preparation for the proposed strategic framework for the period 2018-2019 (A/71/6 (Prog. 24)). This followed a request by the Committee for Programme and Coordination to revise and improve the Secretariat's strategic frameworks so as to more clearly indicate the impact of the implemented activities (see A/70/16). The Department worked closely with the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Department of Management of the Secretariat and carefully reviewed industry standards on measuring communications outcomes in order to clearly articulate where observable change for end users could be quantified.

VI. Conclusion

116. As the United Nations focuses on the major global challenges ahead, including addressing large movements of refugees and migrants and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Department of Public Information will continue to engage people across multiple platforms in as many languages as possible in ways that are interactive, informative and empowering. The Department will continue to deliver on its core mission of producing and sharing stories about United Nations work globally and will work with a broad range of partners to involve them more directly in the larger United Nations mission, to reach new and wider audiences and constituencies.

United Nations A/71/228

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 66 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Rights of indigenous peoples

Status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/159.

* A/71/150.

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Summary

The present report on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/159. It provides updated information on the activities of the Fund since the submission of the previous biennial report (A/69/278), including on the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions of the Board of Trustees, held in 2015 and 2016, respectively. It also reports on the outcome of the intersessional meetings of the Board, a working method established to respond to the expansion of the mandate of the Fund to sessions of human rights treaty bodies and of the Human Rights Council.

I. Mandate of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

1. The initial mandate of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131, was to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations by providing them with financial assistance, funded by means of voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other private or public entities.

2. Over the past 31 years, the mandate of the Fund has been expanded seven times, giving the opportunity to indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of other human rights mechanisms and to contribute to important developments on indigenous issues that take place at the international level.

3. The first expansion of the Fund occurred in December 1995 (see General Assembly resolution 50/156) and made it possible for indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the open-ended intersessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights to elaborate a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. As a result, some 130 indigenous activists received financial support from the Fund to attend sessions on the draft declaration, thus contributing to this major standard-setting exercise, which culminated in the adoption by the Assembly of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

4. The mandate of the Fund was further expanded following the creation by the Commission on Human Rights (in its resolution 1998/20, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1998/247) of an open-ended intersessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system. The General Assembly decided, in its resolution 53/130, that the Fund should also be used to assist indigenous representatives in participating in the deliberations of the ad hoc working group. The Fund subsequently allocated grants to some 50 indigenous representatives to attend meetings of the group.

5. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/22, established the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Subsequent to this development, the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/140, decided that the Fund should also be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in attending the sessions of the Permanent Forum as observers.

6. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/161, expanded the mandate of the Fund so as to facilitate the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations in the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, established as a subsidiary organ of the Human Rights Council in accordance with its resolution 6/36. In addition, in September 2015, following the adoption by the Council of resolution 30/11, in which it requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to convene a two-day expert workshop to review the mandate of the Expert Mechanism and propose recommendations on how it could more effectively promote respect for the

Declaration, the Fund considered it opportune to support the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples in the workshop.

7. In its resolution 65/198, the General Assembly further expanded the mandate of the Fund in order to facilitate the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations and communities in sessions of the Human Rights Council and of human rights treaty bodies.

8. In its resolution 66/296, the General Assembly expanded the mandate of the Fund to include support for representatives of indigenous peoples, organizations, institutions and communities to participate in the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014 and in the preparatory process for the Conference.

9. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/149, changed the name of the Fund from "United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations" to "United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples". This symbolic but highly significant move better reflects the status and rights of those who benefit from the work of the Fund.

10. In its resolution 70/232, the General Assembly further expanded the mandate of the Fund to include support for representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations and institutions to participate in the consultation process on the procedural and institutional steps to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies on issues affecting them.

II. Administration of the Fund and composition of the Board of Trustees

11. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131, the Fund is administered by the Secretary-General, in accordance with the relevant financial rules and regulations of the United Nations on general trust funds for humanitarian assistance, and with the advice of a Board of Trustees. The recommendations of the Board are approved by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Secretary-General. OHCHR acts as the secretariat of the Fund and the Board.

12. The Board is composed of five persons with relevant experience on issues affecting indigenous peoples, who serve in their personal capacity as United Nations experts. The members are appointed by the Secretary-General for a three-year renewable term.

13. The current members for the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2017 are Claire Charters (New Zealand), Myrna Cunningham (Nicaragua), Binota Dhamai (Bangladesh), Anne Nuorgam (Finland) and Legborsi Saro Pyagbara (Nigeria).

III. Grant cycle

A. Meetings of the Board of Trustees

14. The Board has adapted its working methods in order to respond to the new challenges arising from the expansion of the mandate of the Fund to the sessions of the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. To this end, in addition to its annual sessions, the Board has established a system of intersessional meetings organized by e-mail to decide on the allocation of grants to indigenous peoples' organizations and communities that wish to participate in sessions of the Council, including the universal periodic review mechanism, and the human rights treaty bodies. Intersessional meetings are usually held in May, August and November of each calendar year.

B. Admissibility and selection of beneficiaries

15. The criteria for the selection of beneficiaries have been established by the General Assembly, as well as by the Secretary-General upon the recommendation of the Board. The Board has also formulated additional criteria for the selection of beneficiaries attending the sessions of the Human Rights Council, including the universal periodic review, and the human rights treaty bodies, taking into account the specific accreditation and attendance rules that apply to the work of those bodies and mechanisms.

16. During the selection process, the members of the Board try to ensure geographical, gender and age balance and pay special attention to indigenous persons with disabilities. At the sessions of Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism, priority is also given to underrepresented regions. Decisions are taken on the basis of the level of available contributions.

17. The secretariat reviews the recommendations of the Board for consistency with relevant United Nations administrative and financial rules and regulations. The High Commissioner approves, on behalf of the Secretary-General, the recommendations made at the annual session of the Board.

18. Approved travel grants include a round-trip air ticket in economy class from the beneficiary's home town to Geneva or New York and a daily subsistence allowance for the days of the session, which he or she receives upon arrival in Geneva or New York.

19. In the near future, indigenous persons who are interested in receiving assistance from the Fund will have the opportunity to apply online. An online application system for the Fund is being developed based on a system that is already being used by the other two humanitarian funds serviced by OHCHR.

C. Monitoring and evaluation of grants

20. The attendance and contributions of the beneficiaries of the Fund are closely monitored. The secretariat maintains a daily attendance sheet of the grantees and, as part of their reporting obligations, beneficiaries are requested to provide a copy of

their statement and to complete questionnaires on their participation and follow-up activities upon return to their home countries.

21. At its annual session, the Board reviews the status of all travel grants allocated in previous years and the reports containing the secretariat's analysis of the questionnaires submitted by the beneficiaries on their participation and follow-up activities. The Board does not consider applications from indigenous people's representatives and their nominating organizations that have been beneficiaries of the Fund and failed to submit their evaluation questionnaires within the past three years.

22. The Board and the secretariat each send a representative to the sessions of the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism to meet and provide support to all beneficiaries present, including by contributing to their training, and to assess the impact of their participation on the deliberations at the sessions.

IV. Twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions of the Board of Trustees

23. The Board held its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions from 26 to 30 January 2015 and from 18 to 22 January 2016, respectively.

24. At those sessions, the Board reviewed the implementation of the recommendations adopted at its previous sessions and examined information prepared by the secretariat, in particular relating to the extension of the mandate of the Fund, policy issues, capacity-building of indigenous peoples, fundraising efforts and the financial situation of the Fund, including contributions received or pledges made. It decided to allocate grants to indigenous representatives wishing to participate in meetings of the Permanent Forum, the Expert Mechanism and the two-day expert workshop on the review of its mandate, the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review, the human rights treaty bodies and the General Assembly consultation held on 30 June 2016.

25. In addition, the Board met representatives of Member States during two donor meetings that were organized at the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions. Board members expressed their gratitude to the donor States for their generous contributions to the Fund (see para. 51), highlighting the impact that the Fund had had on beneficiaries and their communities, and appealed for increasing support from Governments and other donors.

26. The recommendations made by the Board at its two annual sessions, as well as during the intersessional virtual meetings, were approved on 10 February 2015 and on 11 February 2016 by the High Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary-General.

A. Recommendations for grants at the twenty-eighth session of the Board of Trustees

27. At its twenty-eighth session, the Board considered more than 507 admissible applications. Having examined the applications in the light of the selection criteria, the Board recommended the following for approval by the Secretary-General: 32 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the

fourteenth session of the Permanent Forum; 32 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the eighth session of the Expert Mechanism; and 14 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the twenty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, the twenty-second session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, the 114th session of the Human Rights Committee, the fifty-fifth session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the sixty-ninth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the thirteenth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the fifty-fourth session of the Committee against Torture and the eighty-sixth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

28. Furthermore, the Board set aside a budget to enable representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the sessions of the Human Rights Council, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and the treaty bodies held between July 2015 and March 2016. The Board held three intersessional meetings in May, August and November 2015, during which the Board decided to allocate 27 grants as follows: 2 grants for the sixty-first and sixty-third sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; 1 grant for the eighty-seventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; 2 grants for the seventieth and seventy-first sessions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; 5 grants for the fifty-sixth and fifty-seventh sessions of the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; 11 grants for the participation of indigenous representatives in the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Human Rights Council; 5 grants for the twenty-third session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review; and 1 grant for the 116th session of the Human Rights Committee.

B. Recommendations for grants at the twenty-ninth session of the Board of Trustees

29. At its twenty-ninth session, the Board considered more than 306 admissible applications. The Board recommended the following: 25 grants were allocated to support the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations and communities in the fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum; 20 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the ninth session of the Expert Mechanism; and 2 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the twenty-fourth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and the eighty-ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

30. The Board allocated 14 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the two-day expert workshop to review the mandate of the Expert Mechanism convened pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 30/11.

31. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/232, the Board recommended allocating 14 additional grants to enable the participation of representatives of indigenous organizations and institutions in the consultation process of the General Assembly aimed at enhancing the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives in United Nations meetings on issues affecting them.

32. In view of the ever-growing demand for participation in meetings of the human rights mechanisms and considering the positive impact that participation has on references made to indigenous peoples in international jurisprudence, the Board recommended setting aside a budget, which it would allocate during its intersessional meetings in May, August and November 2016, for 38 grants to cover sessions of the Human Rights Council, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and the treaty bodies to be held from July 2016 to March 2017.

V. Follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and expansion of the mandate of the Fund

33. The Fund played a crucial role in supporting the participation of 105 indigenous peoples' representatives in the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014. In the context of the follow-up to the World Conference and its outcome document, and as a result of Human Rights Council resolution 30/11 and General Assembly resolution 70/232, the latter of which expanded the mandate of the Fund for the seventh time, the Board, at its twenty-ninth session, decided to set aside and allocate a substantial portion of the budget that it would normally use to cover the Expert Mechanism and the September session of the Council to support the participation of 28 indigenous representatives in two extraordinary meetings.

34. The first meeting was the two-day expert workshop to review the mandate of the Expert Mechanism. The second meeting was the consultation held on 30 June 2016 in accordance with resolution 70/232, in which the General Assembly requested the President of the General Assembly to conduct, within existing resources, timely, inclusive, representative and transparent consultations with Member States, indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions from all regions of the world, and existing relevant mechanisms of the United Nations, on the possible measures necessary, including procedural and institutional steps and selection criteria, to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies on issues affecting them.

35. Recalling General Assembly resolutions 63/161, 65/198, 66/296 and 69/2, the Board discussed the implications of supporting indigenous peoples' participation in the two-day workshop on the review of the mandate of the Expert Mechanism and took into consideration the expectations expressed by Member States and indigenous peoples. Regional and gender balance, as well as expertise in human rights and indigenous-specific mechanisms, informed the criteria to select the 14 beneficiaries. As noted above, the Board recommended that 14 additional beneficiaries participate in the General Assembly consultation held on 30 June. In allocating those grants, the Board gave priority to representatives of indigenous peoples or delegates from governing organizations with substantive knowledge and understanding of relevant human rights mechanisms and procedures of the United Nations system.

VI. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

36. At its twenty-ninth session, the Board welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. In view of the impact that the Agenda is likely to have on the rights of indigenous peoples and the historic role of the Fund in promoting the participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations, the Board looked into ways in which the Fund could support the implementation of the Goals within its current mandate. The Board decided to send letters to the relevant ministries and permanent missions in Geneva and in New York of the countries that had volunteered to be reviewed in 2016, encouraging them to include indigenous peoples' representatives in their country consultations, ensure that their concerns are reflected in their country reports and include indigenous peoples' representatives as part of their delegation to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

37. The Board also discussed the importance of supporting indigenous peoples' participation in the country reviews at the high-level political forum.

VII. Thirtieth anniversary of the Fund

38. In 2015, the Fund celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. A series of activities took place on that occasion, including a photographic exhibition at the thirtieth session of the Human Rights Council and the launch of a video showing how instrumental the Fund has been over the years in strengthening the participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes at the United Nations, thus helping to advance the rights of indigenous peoples at the international level.

39. In the context of that celebration, the Board also proposed the publication of a series of Internet-based stories featuring testimonies of grantees of the Fund from the seven indigenous sociocultural regions and the creation of a booklet on the work of the Fund, highlighting its impact through testimonies of former grantees from all the regions of the world.

VIII. Other recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees

A. Follow-up activities

40. At its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions, the Board strongly encouraged the beneficiaries of the Fund, OHCHR field presences and the United Nations country teams to explore opportunities to cooperate and carry out follow-up activities, thus helping to ensure better implementation of the principles contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the decisions, observations and recommendations of the Human Rights Council, the universal periodic review, the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies.

B. Capacity-building and training

41. The Board has repeatedly stressed the role of the Fund not only as a source of travel grants, but also as a mechanism to build the expertise of indigenous beneficiaries, thus making them truly effective participants in United Nations human rights mechanisms.

42. In that respect, the Board underlined the importance of continuing to strengthen efforts to build the capacity of the grantees of the Fund and supported the organization by the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information of several induction courses and human rights training activities that took place at the sessions of the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism. In addition, in collaboration with the University of Arizona, the Fund is supporting the drafting of a practical guide aimed at providing its beneficiaries with a better understanding of how to approach the United Nations human rights mechanisms in order to advocate their rights at the international level more effectively.

43. At its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions, the Board welcomed the cooperation established on an ad hoc basis with human rights NGOs in Geneva, in particular the Centre for Civil and Political Rights, UPR Info, the International Disability Alliance, the International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism and Child Rights Connect. The Board commended the support that they provided to the grantees of the Fund in focusing their advocacy efforts, making constructive and tailored interventions and helping to contribute to the implementation of the recommendations made by human rights mechanisms at the national level.

C. Information-sharing and collaboration with other human rights mechanisms

44. At its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions, the Board recommended that either the Chair or another member of the Board continue to represent the Board at sessions of the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism and to attend the sessions of the Human Rights Council that consider indigenous peoples' issues in order to provide an update on the implementation of the mandate of the Fund.

45. The Board welcomed the constant collaborative efforts made by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism to appeal to States and other interested parties to contribute financially to support the work of the Fund, as well as to help to disseminate information on the activities of the Fund to their respective indigenous networks.

46. In addition, the Board stressed the importance of the practice, established by the Special Rapporteur, of holding meetings with the beneficiaries of the Fund in parallel to the sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum.

IX. Financial status of the Fund and contributions received

47. The Fund is funded by means of voluntary contributions from Governments, NGOs and other private or public entities. The Board can allocate travel grants on the basis of the contributions paid and duly registered by the United Nations

Treasurer, as well as any balance remaining from previous years, as established by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

48. In order to operate and fulfil its mandate in a satisfactory manner, the Fund needs to receive contributions on a sustainable basis. Since its creation in 1985, its mandate has been expanded seven times in response to new developments at the international level to enable the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples and communities in major decision-making processes of interest to them.

49. While these expansions demonstrate the confidence that Member States and others have in the work of the Fund, they also mean new challenges for the Board and for the secretariat in carrying out their activities.

50. The Board noted and welcomed the significant increase in the number of applications received during the current two-year period, compared with the previous one (2013-2014). Nevertheless, the ever-growing number of applications, coupled with new requirements by Member States to support additional meetings, places additional strains on the capacity of the Board to fulfil its mandate.

51. The table below indicates the contributions received from Member States for the period from January 2014 to June 2016. The total amount is $1,364,179, which represents a slight decrease from the previous reporting period of January 2012 to June 2014, in which the total amount of contributions received was $1,379,311.

Contributions received from States (January 2014-June 2016)

(United States dollars)

Contributor	*Amount*	*Year of receipt*
Argentina	10 000	2014
	10 000	2015
	10 000	2016
Australia	130 890	2014
	109 048	2015
Chile	5 000	2014
	10 000	2015
	5 000	2016
Denmark	231 225	2014
	231 225	2015
Estonia	12 706	2014
	10 989	2015
Finland	26 350	2014
	22 371	2015
Holy See	1 417	2014
	1 422	2014
	2 000	2015
Mexico	26 355	2014
	21 021	2015
Mongolia	4 985	2014

Contributor	*Amount*	*Year of receipt*
New Zealand	10 000	2014
Norway	150 150	2014
	120 630	2015
	166 722	2016
Peru	5 000	2014
Spain	19 672	2015
Turkey	10 000	2014
Total	**1 364 179**	

52. Governments, NGOs and other private or public entities are encouraged to contribute to the Fund. Information on how to contribute can be obtained from the secretariat at: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland, or by e-mail: indigenousfunds@ohchr.org.

X. Conclusions and recommendations

53. The year 2015 marked the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, which was an occasion to look back at the work accomplished and the impact that the Fund has had over the years. By supporting the participation of more than 2,000 indigenous representatives in major decision-making processes within the United Nations, the Fund has indirectly contributed to the development of international human rights standards and jurisprudence for the protection and promotion of indigenous peoples' rights.

54. The Fund has given a voice to many indigenous representatives at the United Nations who would otherwise not have been in a position to contribute because of financial constraints. The importance of its work is widely recognized among Member States: the General Assembly has expanded its mandate seven times since it was established in 1985.

55. The number of requests from indigenous peoples to participate in the sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review, as well as the treaty bodies, has increased significantly over the years.

56. Without robust, predictable and sustainable contributions to the Fund, the Board of Trustees will face difficulties carrying out its mandate and responding to these ever-growing demands. After assessing the present financial needs of the Fund, the Board has concluded that, in order for the Fund to operate satisfactorily, it needs a minimum of $700,000 in contributions in 2016. Even that amount would only partially cover the requests for funding that it currently receives.

57. **To be able to expand its support, it is imperative that the Fund receive more funds from Governments and other donors. All States and other potential donors are therefore strongly encouraged to consider contributing to the Fund so that it can continue to ensure strong support for the participation of indigenous peoples in international processes and decisions that have a direct impact on their lives.**